

Mernda Hills Christian College

Parent and Student Handbook



Compiled to reflect the program offered by Mernda Hills Christian College and their policies

This handbook may be amended or updated as the need arises. Amended Jan 2025.

This handbook replaces any previous version.

The SEQTA Portal copy of this handbook is the most up to date and can be accessed from the school website

www.merndahills.vic.edu.au

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College Details

Campus and postal address

370 Bridge Inn Road, Mernda VIC 3754

Hours of operation

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| School hours | 8:45 am - 3:10 pm (Primary) and 3:15pm (Secondary) |
| Reception | 8:30 am - 4:30 pm |
| Library | 9:00 am - 4:30 pm Monday to Thursday 9:00 am - 3:30 pm Friday |

College Directory

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Phone | (03) 9717 7300 |
| Email | admin@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| Absence | (03) 9717 7300 or admin@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| Fees | accounts@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| IT helpdesk | helpdesk@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| Student wellbeing | wellbeing@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| Principal | Ms Kristin Hankins principal@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| Head of Primary | Mr Justin Hunter headofprimary@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| Secondary | Mr Trent J Martin headofsecondary@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| Bursar | Mrs Juliette Trimble bursar@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| Business Managers | Mr Mark Roberts and Mr Chad Strydom businessmanager@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| Chaplains | Pr Trent Martin and Mrs Sandy Wallis chaplaincy@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| Wellbeing Officer | Mrs Natasha Veld wellbeing@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| Enrolment Officer | Ms Sherae Wilson enrolments@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| Learning and Teaching | Mrs Sadriani Kerta and Mr Ben Shaw learningandteaching@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| Learning Support | Mrs Sadriani Kerta learningsupport@merndahills.vic.edu.au |
| VCE Coordinator | Mrs MaryAnn Goro maryann.goro@merndahills.vic.edu.au |

Overview of Mernda Hills

History

Established in 2013, Mernda Hills Christian College (Mernda Hills) includes primary and secondary schools which work together to provide quality Christian education. From 2013 - 2023 Mernda Hills was a campus of Gilson College, known as 'Gilson College Mernda'. In 2024 it celebrated its growth and was recognised as a stand alone school.

Mernda Hills is a registered school established by the Seventh-day Adventist Church and part of Adventist Schools Australia. All Seventh-day Adventist Schools in the State of Victoria form a single system with each school tied constitutionally to Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Ltd. This central organisation controls the employment of all staff and, through its Board of Directors, determines the distribution of financial resources between schools.

The College is open to young people who are willing to support its philosophy and standards of conduct.

Mernda Hills is supported by an advisory School Council, responsible for supporting the school administration in the running of the school. Responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the school rests with the Principal and staff.

Mernda Hills has a reputation for encouraging and supporting each individual student in their desire to learn. We aim for the education of the whole individual. This involves the development of a sense of self-worth, the ability to create and maintain healthy relationships with others, the encouragement of good citizenship with a focus on key values such as respect, responsibility, resilience and learning.

Our ASV Purpose

Transforming lives through Adventist Education.

Our Mission

Nurture for today. Learning for tomorrow. Character for life.

Childsafe Statement of Commitment

All children and young people who come to Mernda Hills Christian College have a right to feel and be safe. We are committed to the safety and well-being of all children and young people by providing child-safe and child-friendly environments both physically and online, where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and can actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

We have zero tolerance for child abuse and other harm and are committed to acting in our students' best interests and keeping them safe from harm.

Mernda Hills Christian College regards its Child Safety responsibilities with the utmost importance. It is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintaining a child-safe culture.

Each member of the Mernda Hills Christian College community has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role that they play individually, and collectively, to ensure that the well-being and safety of all students are at the forefront of all that they do, and every decision that they make.

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger, the Police will be called on 000.

Child Safe Team

Anyone with any concerns, can contact any member of the Child Safe Team below.

- Principal: Ms Kristin Hankins
- Head of Primary: Mr Justin Hunter
- Head of Secondary: Mr Trent J Martin
- Safety Officer: Mr Chadley Strydom
- Wellbeing Officer: Mrs Natasha Veld
- Level Leaders and House Leaders (by invitation)

Alternatively, if you feel more comfortable talking to any other teacher, please do not hesitate. It is important that you speak to a responsible adult if you feel unsafe.

For mental health support:

- mentalhealthonline.org.au
- ecouch.anu.edu.au
- moodgym.anu.edu.au
- mycompass.org.au

Additional support networks available

- Kids Helpline 1800 551 800
<https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens>
- Beyond Blue Youth 1300 224 636
<https://www.youthbeyondblue.com/>
- Headspace
<https://headspace.org.au/young-people/how-to-cope-with-stress-related-to-covid-19/>
- Light FM Careline 03 9583 2273
<https://thelight.com.au/hope/careline/>

Online counselling:

- HeadSpace: eheadspace.org.au (12 - 25 years)
- Kids Helpline: kidshelp.com.au (5 - 25 years)

Statement of Objectives

In keeping with our motto '**Nothing Without God**' and our vision and mission statements, Mernda Hills Christian College aims to foster and promote the following in each student:

Spiritual

- An acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and a desire for intimacy with Him
- A commitment to a consistent Christian lifestyle
- A commitment to personal character development
- A desire to serve God and our fellow human beings
- An appreciation of Christian worship and fellowship
- A desire to share the experience of knowing Jesus with others

Academic

- Literacy and numeracy skills
- The fullness of individual potential
- A commitment to excellence and diligence
- An appreciation of knowledge and truth in harmony with God's word
- The ability to think logically and critically

- Academic excellence and pleasure in learning

Social

- An understanding of the love and acceptance of God as an indication of one's worth and a basis for healthy interpersonal relationships
- An awareness of different cultures and the acceptance of cultural and individual differences in others
- The development of self-control and self-discipline
- An acceptance of responsibility for one's own actions and leadership
- The practice of the habits of courtesy, decorum and graciousness

Physical

- A recognition that we have a sacred responsibility to care for our physical and mental health
- The development of physical capacity by a temperate lifestyle and abstinence from those practices harmful to health
- An awareness of the positive benefits of a healthy diet, exercise, rest, leisure, and recreation
- Teamwork and fair play

Vocational

- A commitment to service as the most fulfilling of life's expectations
- The development of knowledge, skills and abilities as a preparation for work in today's society
- Self direction, self discipline and the efficient use of time
- The ability to work as an individual and as a member of a team
- An awareness of one's own interests and abilities
- Having pride in workmanship and in a job well done
- The development of a high quality work-ethic, together with a proper sense of purpose and the ability to set and achieve goals

Administration

The administration team at Mernda Hills consists of the following:

| Position | Role | Staff for 2025 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Principal | Oversee all aspects of school operation and communication | Ms Kristin Hankins |
| Head of Primary | Oversee day to day aspects of the primary school | Mr Justin Hunter |
| Head of Secondary | Oversee day to day aspects of the secondary school | Mr Trent J Martin |
| Learning and Teaching Coordinators | Learning and Teaching/Curriculum | Mrs Sadriani Kerta and Mr Ben Shaw |
| Learning Support Coordinator | Learning Support, ESO coordination | Mrs Sadriani Kerta |
| Lower Primary Level Leader | Manage the day-to-day matters pertaining to primary student organisation, minor discipline matters and liaising with class teachers | Ms Kathryn Wright |
| Upper Primary Level Leader | | Mrs Adele Bergmann |
| Secondary Learning Leaders - STEM - Humanities - Health and Wellbeing | Oversee the effective implementation of curriculum, innovation and student/staff support across the learning area | Mrs Berenice Sauls Mr Mark Bergmann |
| VCE Coordinator | Administer VCE program and advise students on VCE matters | Ms MaryAnn Goro |

Teaching Staff

All teachers are required to be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching and as such must meet minimum requirements for registration. The School has an excellent mix of youth and experience, with teachers young in the profession mentored and encouraged by experienced staff.

Teachers consistently attend a range of professional development courses to further enhance skills and knowledge of teaching practice.

Enrolment Policy

Mernda Hills Christian College functions to meet the needs of young people seeking quality Christian education. It is open to students without regard to their religious affiliation, ethnic background or gender.

While no religious test is applied, all students are expected to live in harmony with the College's special character as a Christian institution; with appropriate behaviour at all times and respect for the Bible as the Word of God. Students are expected to join in all academic, recreational and spiritual emphasis activities of the school, including attending timetabled Bible classes and Chapel programs.

New Applicants

The application process is commenced by submitting the application form via the online portal, together with supporting information, including a copy of the prospective student's birth certificate, the previous year's school reports, any relevant specialist and/or diagnostic reports and NAPLAN testing results. Additional documents such as VISA Notices, Citizenship certificates and Passport copies may also be required, where applicable.

Full disclosure is required of all information that may be relevant for the school to consider in the application. This would include relevant information about the health and safety of the prospective student and/or that may impact on the safety of other individuals and educational needs.

After the application and required support information are submitted, an appointment will be arranged for an interview with the Principal or Head of School. Prospective students will be asked to sit a general achievement test relevant to their year level of entry. All applications will be reviewed by the Enrolment Committee.

The procedure for enrolments is as follows:

1. Completion of the 'Enrolment Application' including the required supporting materials. This includes the following documents for each applicant:
 - a. a copy of the most recent school report;
 - b. a recent photograph;
 - c. a copy of the Birth Certificate;
 - d. a copy of the Immunisation History Statement;
 - e. a copy of any relevant specialist and/or diagnostic reports; and
 - f. disclosure of information relevant for the school to consider in the application including details pertaining to the health and safety of the prospective student and/or that may impact on the safety of other individuals and the educational needs of the prospective student
2. Submission of the above materials with a non-refundable application fee to the College.
3. Attendance at an interview with the Principal or Head of School: the prospective student and parent/guardian both attend this interview.
4. Completion of a general achievement test (Years 4-10), readiness assessment (Foundation) or other relevant assessment.
5. The Enrolment Committee will consider the enrolment and forward its decision in a timely manner.

Refer to the Enrolment Policy and the Enrolment Terms and Conditions on the website.

Exit Procedures

Notification of withdrawal of enrolment from Mernda Hills must be made in writing to the Enrolment Officer and a de-registration form completed with a minimum of one full school term (10 weeks) advance notice. All fees and charges must be paid in lieu of notice, and no refund of fees paid will be given unless a full term's notice is provided. In exceptional circumstances an application may be made in writing to the Principal for partial or full exemption.

At the conclusion of a student's attendance at Mernda Hills, the student must work through a checklist of relevant tasks to confirm that they are clear to exit the College. These tasks include confirming the return of College resources such as library books, payment of any fees and outstanding costs and other items relevant to the student. The student's device will need to be taken off the network and school licensed programs removed, along with restrictions that limit a student's access to websites not authorised by the school.

Academic Information

Term Dates 2025

| | |
|--------|------------------------|
| Term 1 | 28 January - 4 April |
| Term 2 | 21 April - 27 June |
| Term 3 | 21 July - 19 September |
| Term 4 | 6 October - 9 December |

The Learning Journey

We have a focus on excellence in education, with a holistic approach that prepares students for life outside of the classroom. In practical terms this means that we have high academic expectations of our students and expect them and their parents to share these expectations. Furthermore, we plan for a holistic College program which includes other opportunities to foster resilience, maintain engagement and support students' spiritual, physical and social-emotional skills.

Programs to foster resilience and maintain engagement

These occur across the school through specific curriculum, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Camps occur from Years 5 - 12 as part of the school focus on resiliency and the social objectives of the school program. Secondary school camps have a particular focus on resilience and engagement.

The Year 9 Learning 4 Life program continues as an important aspect of holistic education, integrating aspects of physical, social, emotional and spiritual development. The L4L Program is structured differently to the traditional school program and utilising 'experiential education' to create avenues for students to develop confidence in themselves and others. A significant part of the year is spent outside of the classroom where vital life skills are learned and developed. It provides a framework upon which future success is built. Much of the equipment that is utilised during experiential education is provided by the College but students are encouraged to purchase some items. Purchase guidance is provided by teachers. The Year 9 Level Leader can be contacted for more information.

Year 10 has an intentional transitional program looking towards the VCE with a Career Program, Work Ready activities and a multifaceted integrated program throughout the year to maximise student confidence in selecting the most appropriate subject pathways for themselves for Years 11 and 12.

The Senior School retreat (12 students) increases student leadership engagement, focuses on spiritual centering for the year and builds community within the classes.

All senior students mentor and coach junior students throughout the year in our Flourish Homeroom Program.

Elective programs

A broad-based general education is offered in the Primary and junior Secondary years as part of the delayed specialisation program. This means that there is increasing elective choice as a student moves up through their Secondary school education. The aim of the Year 7 and 8 programs is to provide students with a broad introduction to a range of disciplines. This will assist them in making a more informed choice when progressively more elective choices are made available in Years 9-12.

Educating for Eternity

As a Christian school, we value a spiritual life. The school curriculum includes a religious education component which is compulsory for each student. F-10 students engage in the Encounter Program which focuses on encountering Jesus through biblical studies and values applications. At VCE level, students complete the subject *Religion and Society*; a subject accredited by the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA), giving students credit toward the VCE, and expanding their understanding of world religions and the importance of faith in meaningful living.

Curriculum Organisation

The following subjects are taught in each year level as outlined below:

Primary Subjects

| Foundation - Year 2 | Year 3 - 4 | Year 5 - 6 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Encounter (Biblical Studies) | Encounter (Biblical Studies) | Encounter (Biblical Studies) |
| English | English | English |
| Mathematics | Mathematics | Mathematics |
| Science | Science | Science |
| Humanities and Social Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geography • History | Humanities and Social Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geography • History • Civics and Citizenship | Humanities and Social Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geography • History • Civics and Citizenship • Business and Economics |
| Health, Physical Education | Health, Physical Education | Health, Physical Education |
| Digital and Design Technologies | Digital and Design Technologies | Digital and Design Technologies |
| Performing Arts | Performing Arts | Performing Arts |
| Visual and Media Arts | Visual and Media Arts | Visual and Media Arts |
| Languages - Spanish | Languages - Spanish | Languages - Spanish |

Junior Secondary Subjects

| Year 7 | Year 8 | Year 9 | Year 10 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Biblical Studies | Biblical Studies | Biblical Studies | Biblical Studies |
| English | English | English | English |
| Mathematics | Mathematics | Mathematics | Mathematics |
| Science | Science | Science | Science |
| Humanities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Geography ● History ● Economics & Business ● Civics & Citizenship | Humanities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Geography ● History ● Economics & Business ● Civics & Citizenship | Humanities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Geography ● History ● Economics & Business ● Civics & Citizenship | Humanities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Geography ● History ● Economics & Business ● Civics & Citizenship |
| Health & Physical Education | Health & Physical Education | Health & Physical Education | Health & Physical Education |
| Technologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Food * ● Textiles * ● Wood & Plastic * ● Digital * | Technologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Food * ● Textiles * ● Wood & Plastic * ● Digital * | Electives (Choose 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visual Art ● Design Tech - Food Tech ● Design Tech - Wood & Plastic ● Music ● Languages - French ● Outdoor Education ● Sports Academy | Electives (Choose 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visual Art ● Design Tech - Food ● Design Tech - Wood & Plastic ● Music ● Languages - French ● Outdoor Education ● Sports Academy |
| The Arts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visual Art * ● Music * ● Drama * | The Arts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visual Art * ● Music * ● Drama * | | |
| Languages - French | Languages - French | Experiential Education (Learning 4 Life program) | |
| Invictus | Invictus | Sport | Sport |
| Sport | Sport | | |

* Single semester subjects

Senior Secondary/Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)

Whilst Mernda Hills is a small school, subject choices are surprisingly diverse and flexible, to cater for the interests of students and their capabilities. We are intentional in building flexibility into the VCE program to support students merging subjects from outside Mernda Hills as part of their VCE load. Other providers used by students to complete a subject include Virtual Schools Victoria (VSV) and the Victorian School of Languages (VSL). The cost of external study is borne by parents but may be partly subsidised by the school upon successful completion of the subject. The VCE Coordinator oversees the implementation of the VCE and a VCE handbook is published annually on SEQTA, being made available to students early in Term 1.

Unit numbers in the VCE indicate the level of students for that unit. Unit 1 and 2 subjects are Year 11 level, with Units 3 and 4 being Year 12 level. The standard expectation for students is the completion of 6 sequences of Unit 3 and 4 subjects. Application to vary this is submitted to the VCE Coordinator and decided by the Academic Committee. All Year 11 and 12 students are required to select Religion & Society and English each year plus other subjects to complete a 6 subject load in Year 11 and to give a total of 5 Unit 3&4 sequences (or equivalent for contribution to the ATAR) by the conclusion of Year 12.

The arrangements of subjects on elective blocks for Years 11 and 12 vary from year to year in response primarily to student interest. Students are to select one subject from each block. If a subject is undertaken through another provider (such as VSV or VSL), then this subject would take the place of one of blocks C to F. When that subject block occurs in the timetable, the student attends a set

location (usually the school library) to complete work related to the external subject.

In response to the interests of the class cohorts, the VCE subjects available for Year 10-12 in 2025 are:

Year 11 and 12 VCE Lines 2025

| Lines | Year 11 Subject options (total of 6) | Year 12 Subject options (total of 5) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Line 1 | Legal Studies 1&2 Chemistry 1&2 | Health & Human Development 3&4 |
| Line 2 | English 1&2 | Biology 3&4 Chemistry 3&4 Physical Education 3&4 |
| Line 3 | Religion and Society 1&2 | Business Management 3&4 |
| Line 4 | General Mathematics 1&2 Mathematical Methods 1&2 | Religion and Society 3&4 |
| Line 5 | Business Management 1&2 | English 3&4 |
| Line 6 | Physics 1&2 Health & Human Development 1&2 | Foundation Mathematics 3&4 Psychology 3&4 Physics 3&4 |
| Line 7 | Biology 1&2 Physical Education 1&2 Psychology 1&2 | Art Making and Exhibiting 3&4 General Mathematics 3&4 Mathematical Methods 3&4 |
| Online Learning Via VSL or VSV *upon application only | French 1&2(VSL) Computing 1&2 (VSV) | Computing 3&4 (VSV) Languages: French 3&4 (VSL) English Literature 3&4 (VSV) Visual Communication & Design 3&4 (VSV) |

English and Religion & Society are compulsory for all MHCC students and are highlighted.

Year 10 Extension VCE program

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Students are able to apply for one extension subject | |
| * Students will be closely monitored to ensure successful completion. A student may be moved into a standard Year 10 option if the extension subject proves too difficult. | VCE Unit 1&2 Legal Studies |

Note:

- Yr 11 students study 6 subjects. Variations must be approved by the School Learning Team.
- Yr 12 students study 5 subjects, but one of these may be completed in Yr 11 as part of the Extension Program. Variations must be approved by the School Learning Team.

Introduction of Exams

Year 7 is generally the first occasion that students will encounter exams and topic tests that require revision and study at home. Mernda Hills introduces Years 7 to 10 exams as part of the learning journey. In VCE, students have exams up to 3 hours in length (VCE English is 3 hours) plus a standard reading time of 15 minutes.

As part of the College learning journey, students are gently transitioned towards the rigour of VCE in senior school with the following format:

| Year level | Exam length | Reading time length |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 7, 8 | generally 1 hour | 10 minutes |
| 9, 10 | generally 1.5 to 2 hours | 10 minutes |
| 11 (Unit 1,2) | 1.5 to 3 hrs (matching VCE exam length for subject) | 15 minutes |

University Enhancement

A student can undertake a university subject in Year 12 which contributes to the student's ATAR score and may receive credit at university (conditions apply with the universities). Mernda Hills identifies students who qualify for this option and provides students with information about courses and options.

Distance Education

There may be cases where, due to low student demand, the College may not offer a particular VCE subject that a student is interested in studying. In these instances, students have the option of finding an external provider such as Virtual Schools Victoria, Victorian School of Languages, or a TAFE college to pursue their interests. Where the subject choice is a prerequisite for a tertiary course, Mernda Hills will cover the costs of the subject. In all other cases, the student will be required to cover all costs upon enrolling. Mernda Hills may partly subsidise this cost upon successful completion of the subject. The VCE coordinator will assist in finding appropriate course providers for these students and assist the student in this subject throughout the year.

Language Studies

Spanish (F-6) and French (Years 7 & 8) are taught as the Language subject at Mernda Hills. It is compulsory from Foundation through until the end of Year 8. French is offered as an elective for Year 9 and 10 students.

Other languages can also be studied through the Victoria School of Languages (VSL) either at VSL centres around the Melbourne area or through Virtual Schools Victoria. You may contact VSL directly or consult their website for times and locations. Speak to the Learning and Teaching Coordinator or VCE Coordinator if you wish to be involved in studying through VSL.

Student change of elective during the school year

Requests to change an elective should occur within the **first two weeks of a semester**. Any elective change is subject to availability in the elective sought, required consent being given, and the extent to which the student satisfies any entry requirements for the elective.

A student wishing to change his/her elective is to obtain a Subject Change Form from the Learning and Teaching Coordinator. Subject change requires signing off by the student, parent/guardian, the teachers of the subjects the student is seeking to leave and enter, and the relevant Coordinator. This process allows for counselling of the student by parents, teachers and the relevant Learning Leader. The completed form is to be returned to the Learning and Teaching Coordinator who will seek confirmation by the Academic Committee before the subject change is implemented.

Electives for Years 7-10

The subject change form is obtained from and returned on completion to the Learning and Teaching Coordinator.

VCE Electives (Units 1-4)

The subject change form is obtained from and returned on completion to the VCE Coordinator.

Changes in courses of study for VCE units (1-4) are subject to the regulations of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) and the Mernda Hills VCE student handbook. Both of these are published annually and can be found on the SEQTA Portal.

Tests and Exams

Students are expected to attend all scheduled tests and examinations. If absent for a class test, the student will generally be required to sit the assessment at another time and this may be during lunchtime, after school or another suitable time.

For Secondary students, exams are held near the end of each semester. Exam schedules are published in the Mernda Hills calendar at the start of the year.

Year 7-10 exams include English, Maths, Science, History and Geography. All other subjects' assessments are based entirely on tests, assignments and class activities.

Each VCE Unit 1&2 subject has an exam component which contributes to the satisfactory completion of the subject. VCE Unit 3&4 subjects have practice exam questions throughout the course in addition to School Assessed Coursework. Unit 3&4 Trial exams are held during the September school holidays and in the first few days of Term 4.

Parents are requested to not plan for family holidays during school terms and in particular during exam periods. **There is no provision for students to sit for early exams and missed exams are not rescheduled, resulting in missed learning opportunities.** The only exemption for missed exams is for medical exemptions for senior students who have missed SACs. These must be re-sat at the earliest possible convenience.

VCAA rules apply to the timing of VCAA exams for Unit 3 and 4 VCE subjects. These rules mean that an exam cannot be changed from the exam schedule published by the VCAA.

Mernda Hills Exam Rules

These rules apply to all exams, KATs and SACs completed under exam conditions.

1. You can only bring the material your teacher has permitted into an examination room.
2. Pencil cases can only be brought into the examination room if they are transparent and the contents are visible to the supervisor.
3. There is to be no borrowing or lending during the exam. All students must have their own pens, pencils, and other permitted materials.
4. No 'White Out' is to be used in the exam.
5. No soft toys or other playthings are to be brought into the exam room.
6. There is to be no talking or communication between students during reading or writing time.
7. No one is to leave an exam early.
8. Language dictionary/translator is permitted ONLY where authorised by the subject teacher. ONLY paper-based, no electronic versions.
9. Answers are to be written in full English text, not SMS text. (Exception: Maths, Science, etc. where numerals and symbols may be used as appropriate.)
10. There is to be no writing or marking of any paper (this means writing paper and exam paper) during reading time.

11. No writing paper is to be taken into or from the exam room.
12. Full school uniform must be worn into the exam room.
13. Any cheating will result in automatic cancellation of the exam paper and loss of marks.
14. If needing water, water bottles must be clear, plain and with no labels, and must be on the floor beside the desk, not on the desk.
15. Mobile phones and other electronic devices including watches that are capable of storing, receiving or transmitting information or electronic signals, such as smartwatches and fitness trackers, are not permitted in an examination room, even if they are off.
16. Failure to abide by the rules above could lead to automatic cancellation of the exam paper and subsequent loss of marks.

Bell Times and Timetables

Students should arrive at school no later than 8:40 am in order to have materials needed for classes when attending the morning roll mark at 8:45 am. If a student arrives later than the scheduled start or leaves before the scheduled end of the school day, they must sign in/out of Front Reception.

Teacher supervision on the school grounds commences at 8:15 am and concludes at 3:45 pm. No student is to attend school outside these times unless there is a particular school function or excursion which requires student attendance or using the Library as outlined below.

The Library is open and available for secondary students to study:

- Monday - Thursday: 9:00am - 4:30pm
- Friday: 9:00am - 3:30pm

The school day has 6 periods organised in three blocks. Classes are usually 50 minutes in length.

The Primary school timetable operates on a weekly cycle, while the Secondary school timetable operates on a 2 week cycle (so a 10 week school term will have 5 rotations of this 2 week timetable). A Secondary school term always commences with week 1 of the timetable.

The school timetable will change during the year. A new timetable will operate for each semester due to some subject changes between semesters. The timetable may need to be modified at other times during the year to meet College needs.

2025 Bell Times

| Daily Timetable | Primary | Secondary |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Before School Supervision starts | 8:15 | |
| Homeroom / Worship | 8:45 - 9:05 | 8:45 - 9:05 |
| Period 1 | 9:05 - 9:55 | 9:05 - 9:55 |
| Period 2 | 9:55 - 10:45 | 9:55 - 10:45 |
| Recess | 10:45 - 11:05 | |
| Period 3 | 11:05 - 11:55 | 11:05 - 11:55 |
| Period 4 | 11:55 - 12:45 | 11:55 - 12:45 |
| Lunch | 12:45 - 1:35 | |
| Period 5 | 1:35 - 2:25 | 1:35 - 2:25 |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Period 6 | 2:25 - 3:10 | 2:25 - 3:15 |
| School busses depart | 3:20 | |
| After School Supervision ends | 3:45 | |

Absence from class/school: student responsibilities

A student may have a legitimate reason for not being present for all or some of a class, such as:

- Private music tuition at school
- Appointment at school with tutor or counsellor
- Absent for part of a day for an unavoidable appointment
- Absent for a full day for medical or family reasons

Absences must be reported to Front Reception by phone, signed note, or email to admin@merndahills.vic.edu.au.

If a Secondary student misses one or more classes, it is the student's responsibility to:

- Hand in any work (assignment/homework) that was due in the missed class.
- Ask a reliable classmate or the teacher for worksheets and/or other work given in the class.
- Check SEQTA for any handouts and instructions.
- Catch up on missed work.
- Arrange (as soon as possible) with the class teacher to sit any missed tests.
- Bring a note or arrange for parents to email Front Reception about the absence. Front Reception can be contacted on admin@merndahills.vic.edu.au. For more detailed information on absences please see *Attendance: student procedures for absences*.

Books and Supplies

In Primary, books and stationery supplies are included within annual school fees and provided to students at school. For Secondary students, the College provides all textbooks used in classes. Most textbooks are purchased by the College and are rented by students. Rental fees are included in school fees and most resources (books and digital resources) are issued within the first week of Term 1. Textbook loss or damage is recorded and repairs/replacement resources are charged to parents.

For Secondary stationery, unless stated otherwise, supply of these items is not included in the fees. Secondary students are expected to provide their own supplies as outlined in the stationery lists which may be found on the website.

Devices

Mernda Hills uses the Google Suite for Education as the digital collaboration platform. From Foundation to Year 4, devices are provided by the school for use as a tool for learning in the classroom. From Year 5 onwards, students will require a school-approved personal laptop to participate in the school curriculum.

The following arrangements are currently in place to facilitate appropriate, reliable and cost effective digital access for all students.

- Year 5-8 students - Specific Chromebook and bag are required and are purchased via [this link](#). *NOTE: Chromebooks MUST be purchased through the school portal to function smoothly on our College network.*
- Year 9-12 students - A Macbook Air is provided by the College - Students/families pay a deposit

to the College and receive a Macbook Air device for use throughout Senior Secondary. At the end of Year 12, students/families may pay an additional fee to buy out the device, or alternatively can return the device to the College.

- Any student breach of the Acceptable Use Agreement may lead to the loss of device use privileges at the College.

Charged battery is the responsibility of the student. Students must have their device charged before each school day starts. Chargers and extension cords are not permitted in the classroom as they become tripping hazards. They are also not practical when moving between rooms for each lesson.

Laptop bags including the cross-body strap must be used to prevent damage or dropping when moving between classrooms. Year 5-8 laptop cases are prescribed in the purchasing portal and have been chosen based on durability, functionality and cost-efficiency.

Devices are not to be used outside of the classroom unless instructed to do so by a teacher, including during break times.

Network settings are in place to promote learning and protect students. The internet at Mernda Hills is filtered through our onsite firewall. Students must always use the Mernda Hills network while on campus and must never use a hotspot unless directed by a teacher. Mernda Hills network settings will only apply to devices while they are on the school network or during school times.

The College IT team has a limited number of Chromebooks that can be borrowed for a short period from Front Reception in the event of a student's own device being temporarily unavailable. These devices cannot be borrowed overnight or during school holidays. This service is for short term use only and students needing to borrow for more than one day will need to show evidence of their device being logged for repair.

Chromebook repairs need to be logged with LWT: service@lwt.com.au ph 1300 556 788 and may be covered under warranty/insurance, depending on what the family paid for at the time of purchase.

Macbook repairs are taken to IT Helpdesk to be assessed and sent to CompNow (additional fees may apply).

Replacement laptops for Year 5-8 must be purchased through the order portal.

Homework

Regular homework and an organised study program are expected of each student and will play an important part in his/her success. Parent support is also of significant value. This may be demonstrated in a range of ways including checking student diary for homework entries, assisting the student in planning ahead for homework completion that fits the family schedule and, where possible, planning for a specific homework location for the student.

The aim is for students to develop independent management of homework because:

- Students are on a 'Learning Journey' and so need to develop good learning and skills in preparation for moving up through school education and for those aiming for higher education (e.g. University).
- Work done in class periods needs consolidation. To be able to remember information and skills, they have to be rehearsed (practised and reviewed). Current research on high performing students demonstrates that rehearsal significantly improves recall and performance.

It is expected that students will increase the amount of time spent on homework with progress into more senior year levels. As a guide, the suggested average amounts of homework are as follows (based on four nights a week):

| Year level | Recommended average homework/night |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| F - 1 | 10 - 15 min |
| Year 2 | 20 - 30 min |
| Year 3 - 4 | 30 - 45 min |
| Year 5 - 6 | 45 - 60 min |
| Year 7 - 8 | 1 to 1.5 hours |
| Year 9 - 10 | 1.5 to 2 hours |
| VCE | 2.5 - 3 hours + each night PLUS extra on weekends as needed. |

Students who do not have specific homework on a particular evening should be encouraged to use their time at home for extra academic activities such as reading.

Review is a key element of maintaining memory of information. Ideally, students should review new class material at the following intervals:

- within the first 24 hours;
- then a week later;
- then less than one month later (if not sooner)

It is strongly recommended that parents be involved in their child's homework routine as much as possible. Students who have parental involvement and guidance are far more successful and able to manage the stresses of academic life. Note, this does not mean parent's 'doing' the homework, but providing guidance and support.

Student Support

Within Primary, additional support for students is provided by the classroom teacher or Learning Support team. In Secondary, if a student does not complete a homework or assignment task (or submits sub-standard work), the teacher may list the student for Lunchtime Support.

Lunchtime Support may be given for:

- Work not completed by the due date.
- Work not completed to the required standard or work that has been plagiarised.
- Test performance that demonstrates application and preparation below a satisfactory or required standard.

The purpose of using the lunchtime support system is to hold students accountable for completing set tasks. Most Secondary students manage their work well so it is anticipated that students included in this process will be those who need additional encouragement and support to better manage their schoolwork.

The teacher has the discretion to determine which work warrants a support listing. A student may be listed for more than one occasion for the same piece of work if the work remains not completed or below standard.

Lunchtime Support sessions have priority over all other school appointments, including practices or meetings of a particular group. Once listed, the student must attend and spend the entire duration of the session in the support room - usually the Library. During the support session they will work on the homework/assignment that is late or substandard. If the task has been completed and/or handed in, then the student attends and remains in the support room completing other schoolwork.

Secondary Academic Support Details

This is a 45 minute session completed during lunchtime on Wednesdays.

Students are informed by the teacher and via SEQTA notices when they are expected to attend. It is an expectation that students regularly check their school emails and SEQTA notices.

If a student does not attend the set lunchtime support session or is late without a valid reason, then the student will be assigned to an additional lunchtime support session.

Every third *Lunchtime Support* a student is assigned means the 45 minute lunchtime session PLUS an additional 60 minute *After-School Homework* session applies.

A sample scenario is:

- 1st listing for homework: serve a 45 minute Lunchtime Support session
- 2nd listing for homework: serve a 45 minute Lunchtime Support session
- 3rd listing for homework: serve a 45 minute Lunchtime Support session PLUS a 50 minute After-school Homework session

Secondary After-School Homework Session

This is a 50 minute session completed after school, on a Monday between 3:30 and 4:20 pm.

Secondary Authentication of student work

Students must ensure that all unacknowledged work submitted for assessment is genuinely their own. Teachers may consider it appropriate to ask students to demonstrate their understanding of the task at or about the time of submission of the work. If any part or all of the work cannot be authenticated, the matter must be dealt with as a breach of rules.

Academic Reports

The school year is organised into two semesters. Assessment of students occurs on a continuous basis throughout the school year. A range of evaluation instruments and techniques are used.

There are two parent-teacher interview sessions in a year, and dates for these are published in the Mernda Hills calendar to enable parents to plan well ahead to attend. Teachers are generally available between 4pm and 6pm on these evenings. Bookings are required online and booking instructions are sent to families before each interview event.

An Interim report is provided in Term 1 to give a brief indication of how students are settling into the year. Formal Semester Academic reports are issued in Terms 2 and 4 via the SEQTA Parent Portal. There is no written report issued in Term 3.

Refer to the website calendar for SEQTA release dates for reports and for parent-teacher interview dates. Generally these occur at the beginning of Terms 2 and 3. Emails are sent to parents with details for making interview bookings. The Newsletter also includes upcoming events.

Awards Ceremonies

Annual Primary and Secondary Awards Ceremonies are held during Term 4. The purpose of the ceremonies is to acknowledge student achievement across various areas such as academics, sports, and citizenship, as well as celebrating the year and our graduating classes. The Awards Ceremonies are listed on the Mernda Hills calendar. All students are expected to attend in full summer academic uniform, including blazer for Secondary students.

Co-curricular and Extracurricular Programs

Mernda Hills has a range of co-curricular and extracurricular experiences to support student development.

Student Representative Council (SRC)

The SRC provides opportunities for student leadership and contribution to improving student life. The SRC provides a forum for student suggestions and enhances the contribution of Mernda Hills to the community by organising fundraising events for various charities selected by the SRC. All students have the opportunity to apply for the SRC on an annual basis. They complete an application and are chosen by the students, School Captains and a Staff Representative.

Day Incursions and Excursions

Throughout the year various subject teachers will require their students to be involved in a day incursion or excursion relevant to the topic being studied. These are usually conducted during normal school hours. Students are required to attend the event in academic school uniform unless the excursion has specific needs that are better met with sports uniform or non-uniform clothing. If this is the case, the excursion information letter will specify the dress code for the event.

Overnight Camps

Class trips for Years 5 - 12 are arranged in which students are encouraged to accept new challenges and learn new skills. The dates for year level trips are in the annual calendar. The cost of these camps is incorporated into the school levies.

Currently, students attend the following camps:

| Year level/s | Trip |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Year 5 - 6 | Canberra (ACT) or Sovereign Hill (VIC) |
| Year 7 - 8 | Golden Valleys Adventure Camp (VIC) |
| Year 9 | Learning 4 Life - a range of hiking and service camps (VIC) |
| Year 10 | Mount Buffalo Adventure Sports (VIC) |
| Year 11 | Avondale University (NSW) |
| Year 12 | Ocean Grove (VIC) |

Bible Studies

Students who wish to have Bible studies at school with the chaplains are encouraged to do so. These will be arranged at a time suitable for the schedules of the chaplains and student. There are also group Bible studies available on an as-needed basis.

Sport

A key part of the holistic program is the opportunity for students to engage in physical activity and acquire and practise sporting skills.

The sports program aims to:

- Develop each student's fitness and sporting skills to their personal best.
- Expose students to a wide range of sporting activities.

- Develop in each student sportsmanship, team spirit and school pride.
- Encourage in each student a sense of determination, self-discipline and perseverance.
- Teach students to win or lose with dignity and grace.
- Give opportunities for students to interact positively with students from other schools.

There are two intra-school Sport Houses:

- Corliss (red)
- Barnett (blue)

These Houses compete in a variety of inter-house competitions, with a tally of scores being kept throughout the year. The winning House is announced at Primary and Secondary Awards Nights.

In addition, Mernda Hills Christian College is a member of School Sports Victoria and competes in its carnivals and weekly round-robin competitions. Participation in external extra-curricular activities is conditional upon appropriate behaviour and conduct.

Details on uniform requirements for sport are contained in the Uniform section of this handbook.

The Library

The main function of the library is to support the learning and teaching needs of the College. Students are encouraged to use the facilities.

| | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Opening Hours | Monday - Thursday | 9:00 am - 4:30 pm |
| | Friday | 9:00 am - 3:30 pm |

Borrowing

The library provides books and periodicals to support the academic and recreational reading programmes of the College. Each student must only use the library to borrow materials for him/herself. The maximum number of items that a student may have on loan at one time varies from 1-4 books per fortnight, depending on their year level; higher year levels are able to borrow more items.

The standard borrowing term is two weeks. Loans may be extended by a further two weeks if not in demand by other users. It is the borrower's responsibility to check the due date for the book's return as a reminder notice is not given before the due date. Students with overdue books are reminded to return them. A student with an overdue book is unable to borrow further books until the book is returned. If a student has prior knowledge of an absence such as school camp, work experience, family holidays, etc., the student needs to return or renew the books prior to the absence.

The library aims to balance reasonable borrowing times with having materials available for other student use. The replacement value of any lost books will be charged to parent accounts, and the student will not be able to borrow further until the matter is finalised. Continued failure to resolve the matter with the librarian will be followed up with the student's Head of School.

The College library is used for both private study and classroom reading and research purposes. Senior students are able to go to the library for private study whenever their timetable allows.

The library is to be used for study or reading at all times – it is not a place for social networking. Students who fail to use the library as expected may face disciplinary measures.

Textbooks - Secondary

Mernda Hills provides all textbooks used in classes. Most textbooks are purchased by the College and rented by the students. The rental fees are included in school fees. Most books are issued to the

students during the first week of classes. This may also include digital resources.

As the College owns the textbooks, it is important that students show care in their textbook use. At the end of the year textbook loss or damage is recorded and compensation charges made to parent accounts.

Guidelines for Library Use

- A quiet atmosphere conducive to study must be maintained at ALL times.
- Classes using the library must wait outside for the teacher to arrive before entering the library.
- No food, drinks or bags in the library.
- No technology items may be used for personal entertainment/non-educational purposes in the library without the explicit permission of the librarian. This includes mobile phones and other electronic devices.
- Books taken from shelves are to be left on the desk at the end of the book stack. Students are not to return the books to the shelves.
- Damage is to be reported to the librarian or teacher in charge.

Financial Information

It is the aim of Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Ltd. to keep fees as low as is consistent with good management and quality education.

Funding comes from three main sources:

1. Tuition fees
2. Commonwealth and State Government grants
3. Funds contributed by each Seventh-day Adventist Church within the area served by the School

Tuition

The payment options for school fees are cash, BPAY, credit card or direct debit. A prompt payment discount is given for the net tuition fee only (ie. Tuition less any discount) if fees are paid by the discount date shown on each term's invoice. The College reserves the right to adjust these discounts with 3 months written notice. Refer to the Enrolment Terms and Conditions available on the College website.

Payment of Fees

Responsibility for ensuring the fees reach the School by the due date lies with the parents. Unless arrangements are made personally with the Principal, an unpaid fee account may lead to the student's enrolment being suspended or terminated. Students with fees outstanding from previous years will not be permitted to re-enrol for the following year without an exemption from the College Business Manager. This also applies to unpaid fees from previous schools. Furthermore, students who are in arrears with payments at the end of each term may not be permitted to commence the next term until payment has been made or a suitable arrangement has been agreed upon with the Principal. Mernda Hills reserves the right to employ a debt collection agency in the event of on-going unpaid school fees.

The College has the right to withhold student reports, or not allow students to return to school or to attend extracurricular functions such as school camps and the annual Year 12 Formal if school fees are unpaid.

Levies

In addition to the tuition component of fees, a consumables levy and building levy is applied. The building levy is an annual payment to contribute towards ongoing building and development projects to support student learning. The consumables levy contributes to non-tuition costs such as camps, excursions, lockers, library resources, stationery, online tutorial programs, sports programs, technology, infrastructure, etc.

Impact of Withdrawal on Fees

Staffing needs are determined by the number of students enrolled at the commencement of the College year so ongoing costs associated with providing education are maintained whether a student remains a student for the full year or is absent for any length of time. Because of this, students who are removed from the College without a term's notice being given will be charged a term's fees in lieu of that required notice. Likewise, students who are taken from the College for extended periods of time on holidays, suspension, illness or de-registration etc. will not receive a refund on the tuition costs charged. Exception to these provisions is available only in extenuating circumstances (which will be determined by the Principal and College Council).

If a student gives one term's notice of their intention to withdraw from the College, fees paid in advance will be refunded. However, students who are withdrawn from the College part way through a term will not be eligible for any refund of fees paid for that term.

Insurance

The school organises accidental injury insurance which covers all students 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. The cost is incorporated in the service levy. The insurance has a schedule with set amounts payable per defined event. In the event of a claim, forms are available from the school office. Be aware that private health insurance must be first activated by parents before a claim can be made for a student against the insurance policy.

Music Tuition

Individual tuition in music theory and practical music is available for a range of instruments including piano and drums. Requests for tuition in other instruments will be considered, depending on the demand. Music fees are not included in College fees and are payable directly to the music teacher. Information about teachers and availability is published in the school newsletter at the start of the school year.

Bus Transport Fees

Families electing to have their child/ren travel to and from school on the College's private bus system will incur fees for this service. These charges are to be paid separately from school fee accounts.

Note: All bus fees must be paid in full in advance. No students will be permitted to travel on the bus unless all fees are paid in advance.

Parents with enquiries should direct them to the Bus Coordinator on (03) 9717 7300 or via email at bus@merndahills.vic.edu.au. Where fees remain unpaid, the student will be denied access to the service. See Bus Fee Schedule for costs.

After Hours Care

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) is the program established to provide care for children of parents whose work commitments prevent them from keeping to 'normal' school hours. OSHC operates in

the Acacia Room on school days from 7am until 6pm.

The OSHC program is mainly, but not exclusively, for Primary-aged students. OSHC staff are trained and qualified and ensure that healthy activities, food and entertainment are provided when appropriate. OSHC payments are not included in College fees and separate arrangements must be made. Contact oshc@merndahills.vic.edu.au for details.

Conduct Guidelines

Code of Conduct

Mernda Hills Christian College recognises that every student, including all First Nations students, has the right to learn and gain a quality education in a safe environment. Students of Mernda Hills Christian College are encouraged to maintain high standards in all areas of behaviour - both personal and academic. The College has a Student Behaviour Management Policy that is available on the public website.

The following guidelines are indicative of the behaviour that is expected.

Each student is expected to:

- Do his/her best to be successful at school work.
- Be polite and respectful relating to others (in word and action).
- Show exemplary behaviour in public including when travelling to and from College, on excursions and at school events such as sport.
- Speak and act in a manner consistent with the values and beliefs of the school as a Christian institution. Conduct and materials relating to areas such as the occult, wicca, witchcraft and/or pornography are not consistent with these values and beliefs.
- Cooperate willingly with everyone at all times.
- Be at the College during normal school hours, attending all classes and appointments on time.
- Accept correction without argument.
- Act in a safe, sensible and responsible manner at all times.
- Follow the uniform code, including wearing a well-maintained uniform in the correct manner.
- Show courtesy and respect for others at all times through appropriate use of language and courteous interactions. Bullying, fighting, put-downs and racism are not accepted.
- Show respect for the property of the school and others.
- Use technology (including internet, mobile phones, digital images, etc.) in accordance with the College's Acceptable Use Agreement.
- Act in accordance with bus behaviour expectations when travelling on a Mernda Hills bus or a bus hired for a school purpose.
- Not bring banned items to school or school events.
- Not trade/buy/sell items belonging to other students. The only exception to this is the selling of second hand uniforms. This requires parental consent.
- Not bring items to school that are not necessary for classes. Students bring personal items at their own risk. Any loss or damage to personal items is at the student's own risk and expense. The

school will not intervene or be responsible for items deemed to be lost/stolen/damaged by another student.

Banned

Students are not permitted to possess or use any of the following (within the school grounds or while travelling to and from school, with the limited exception for electronic equipment):

- Illegal substances - including tobacco, recreational drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, vaping.
- Items and/or material (including images) that present moral danger to students including those related to the occult and/or pornography.
- Electronic equipment - including electronic games, game consoles.
- Firearms, knives, dangerous weapons, water missiles or explosives of any kind.
- Chewing/bubble gum.

Digital Citizenship - Acceptable Use Agreement

The Mernda Hills Acceptable Use Agreement aims to define acceptable use and conduct to be a good citizen in the use of technology. This forms the basis of the notion of responsible digital citizenship. It is intended to cover the range of digital/electronic devices used for communication (including for recording and producing information, recordings and images). It covers the internet, computers, mobile phones, video and still cameras and similar devices. It is designed to protect the intellectual property and privacy rights of relevant parties.

This Agreement applies to students at school and also during school excursions, camps and extracurricular activities. It includes the following expectations:

1. When using the school network, school computer resources and internet the student is to:
 - Behave according to the Student Code of Conduct.
 - Protect the student's own privacy rights and those of other students by not giving out personal details including full names, telephone numbers, addresses and images.
 - Use appropriate language when talking to and working with others online and never participate in hate mail or acts of harassment.
 - Respect others when communicating and working with them online and never write or participate in online bullying behaviours.
 - Use the internet at school for educational purposes and use the equipment in the spirit intended.
 - Use social networking sites at school for educational purposes and only as directed by teachers.
 - Not deliberately enter or remain in any site that has obscene language or offensive content (e.g. racist material, violent images, obscene or pornographic material, content promoting unlawful activities).
 - Abide by copyright procedures when using content on websites (ask permission to use images, text, audio and video and cite references where necessary).
 - Use content posted on the internet constructively and reflectively, and not simply copy and paste information from websites.
 - Not interfere with network security, the data of another user or attempt to log into the network with a username or password of another student.
 - Not reveal passwords to anyone except the system administrator or classroom teachers.
 - Not allow another student to access or use their school login or email account.
 - Not copy without authorisation the files, data or software of the College, staff or students.
 - Not tamper with hardware, network connections, cables or equipment positioning.

- Not bring or download unauthorised programs, including games, to the School or run them on School computers.
 - Talk to the teacher or another adult if:
 - Needing help online.
 - Concerned that the welfare of other students at the school is being threatened.
 - The student comes across sites which are not suitable for school access.
 - Someone writes something the student doesn't like, or makes the student and/or others feel uncomfortable or asks for information that is private.
2. When using technology to record images or other material (including mobile phones, cameras), the student is to:
- Only use it for learning purposes as directed by a teacher.
 - Act responsibly and not use the device to find, create or send information that might be harmful, inappropriate or hurtful to him/herself or anyone else.
 - Only take photos and record sound or video when it is part of a class or lesson.
 - Seek permission from individuals involved before taking photos, recording sound or videoing them (including teachers).
 - Seek written permission from individuals involved before publishing or sending photos, recorded sound or video to anyone else or to any online space.
3. When using mobile phones at school, the student is to:
- Only use the mobile phone if invited by a staff member for a specific learning purpose.
 - Keep the phone on silent during school hours.
 - Store the phone in the student's locked locker.
 - Only make or answer calls and messages outside school hours, except for specific learning purposes (emergency calls can be made or taken at Front Reception).
 - Protect the privacy of others and never post private information about another person using sms messages or any other forms of social media.
 - Ensure that the contents of the phone (images, etc.) complies with expectations specified in the school handbook (i.e. no profanity, pornography, occult themes or images).

If a student is found using a mobile phone during school hours (except where permission is granted by a teacher), the teacher will state that the phone must be turned off and given to the teacher. The teacher takes the device, and delivers it to the Front Office for safe keeping. They label it, store it safely, call the parents letting them know this has happened and the parent can pick it up at the end of the day.

Similarly, if a student is using headphones or earbuds outside of teacher permission for a specific learning task, they will need to remove them.

Further incidents will follow the College's behaviour management policy.

Travel - General

The College has a duty of care to students when they travel to and from school. The Student Code of Conduct, therefore, also applies to students during this time. Students should act with care, courtesy and common sense, maintaining their own safety and that of other travellers. They are to uphold the standards set by the School at all times.

Bus Travel Code

Mernda Hills has a private bus system. Student use of this bus system for travel to and from school is subject to route availability, payment in advance of applicable fees, and student compliance with the following bus travel code for bus travel. The bus travel code applies to any student using a school bus or a bus hired by the school (such as travelling for sport, excursions, etc.). The provisions of the bus travel code are in addition to the Student Code of Conduct.

When travelling on a school journey, each student is expected to:

- Be on time at the bus stop or agreed pick up point.
- Sit down and face the front (i.e. wearing a seatbelt, not kneeling or twisting on the seats).
- Not stand up or walk around in the bus while it is moving.
- Speak quietly, using appropriate language.
- Not consume food or drink.
- Maintain safety for self and others by not throwing or holding anything out of the windows - keep head, arms, etc., inside.
- Respect the bus by not damaging or defacing the bus in any way.
- Show respect for others by not harassing, teasing or bullying other passengers.
- Show respect for members of the public by not pulling faces or making gestures to people outside the bus.
- Respect and obey the bus driver.

Breaches of behaviour expectations on school buses may result in the student being refused access to the bus system. If a child will not be travelling on the bus on a particular day (e.g. absent, early or late excursion) the family must notify the bus driver ahead of time to prevent delays. If a student is not at the bus stop (or agreed pick up point) at the required time, the bus will not wait. Note that, in order to show respect to other houses in the street, bus drivers will not 'beep' the horn for students.

Attendance: student procedures for absences, late arrival and/or early leave

If a student is not present for all or part of the school day due to absence, late arrival, early leave, or leave and return during the same day for an appointment, the student must follow certain procedures so the school knows the absence is legitimate and can ascertain which students are on campus in the event of an evacuation. We require parents/guardians assistance in making sure that the following procedures are correctly followed so our attendance is accurately recorded.

Absences

If a student is absent for the day the school must be notified by phone call on (03) 9717 7300 or by email to admin@merndahills.vic.edu.au. If this does not happen an SMS will be sent to parents to advise that their child is marked absent and the parent will need to call the school for confirmation.

Late to School

If a student arrives at school any time after 8.45 am they are considered late. On arrival at school after this time, the student must sign in at Front Reception in the school office and obtain the late pass. Students must give the late pass to their teacher upon entering their class.

If the student is late and does not sign in, the parent will receive an SMS to advise their child has been marked absent and the parent will need to call the school for confirmation. Late to school 3 times without a reasonable excuse will incur a lunchtime conversation with the classroom or homeroom teacher and an appropriate follow-up strategy to prevent future lateness will be implemented.

Leaving School Early

No student is allowed to leave the school grounds before 3.20 pm without consent from a parent/guardian.

If a student needs to leave school before the official end of school, a signed note, an email to Front Reception at admin@merndahills.vic.edu.au or call to the school on (03) 9717 7300 is required for the student to leave the school premises. This should happen as early as possible on the school day, or with at least 20 minutes notice.

At the time of departure the parent/guardian will need to sign out the student at Front Reception. Parents/guardians may be asked to wait until the end of the school period to avoid disrupting classes.

Other Absences

If for any reason the student is taken out of school during the term for an extended period of time such as family holidays, extended weekends, medical procedures, etc. then Front Reception is to be notified by email to admin@merndahills.vic.edu.au.

Please note that it is not sufficient to notify the child's classroom teacher, or homeroom teacher only.

Due to legal and child safety requirements, it is of utmost importance that the school is informed regarding anything to do with the student's attendance. All enquiries/information regarding attendance can be directed to admin@merndahills.vic.edu.au.

Classroom Entry and Use

All students are to wait outside the classroom before the commencement of the learning block (primary) and each period (secondary). Students will enter a classroom only at the instruction of a teacher. When lining up outside classrooms, safety and courtesy are to be demonstrated by ensuring the path of others is not blocked. RUNNING or PUSHING in the corridors and/or stairs is a safety hazard and so is not permitted. Unless by special arrangement (such as on rainy days), food is not to be eaten in secondary classrooms.

College Care

All students are expected to assist at all times in maintaining the cleanliness and tidiness of classrooms and grounds. Every student is expected to keep the grounds clean by placing their litter in bins and by picking up any litter they see.

Breakages and Vandalism

Any damage to school property must be reported immediately to the Principal. Where practicable and safe to do so, the person responsible for the damage is responsible for immediately cleaning any mess. The cost of repairing and/or replacing damage deemed to be from wilful or irresponsible actions will be the responsibility of the person/s who caused and/or contributed to the damage. No student is allowed on any roof at any time. Graffiti and other damage to the property of others breach the student Code of Conduct.

Lockers - Secondary Students

Each Secondary student is allocated a locker for use during the school year. Students are required to keep all possessions in their assigned locker. Students are expected to care for their allocated lockers and keep them tidy and free of rubbish at all times. A College approved lock must be used to secure the locker door- these can be purchased through the Front Office.

Students are to only access their lockers before school, during recess, during lunch and after school. This means taking materials for the two classes scheduled between each break.

For maintenance issues, please contact admin@merndahills.vic.edu.au.

Student Behaviour Management - Positive Behaviour For Learning (PB4L)

Our core mission is to be a positive learning community that nurtures students to be responsible, respectful, resilient and to demonstrate a learner mindset. These are attributes that will prepare them for life. The aim of the Student Behaviour Management Procedure is to encourage each student to

become self-disciplined and to take responsibility for his/her own actions.

Commendations

The procedure attempts to achieve this by placing emphasis on positive behaviour through a range of merits called 'Commendations' in the Primary and Secondary school. A Commendation is given for demonstrating outstanding behaviour in relation to one or more of the targeted school values which currently are:

- **Respect**
- **Responsibility**
- **Resilience**
- **Being a Learner**

A staff member may award a commendation to a student for a range of reasons to acknowledge individual achievement or endeavour in schoolwork, school life, or community participation. Generally, a student should not request recognition. When given a commendation, the student is rewarded through an assembly program and can progress through a variety of 'levels' as they accumulate them by demonstrating positive behaviours. Records will be kept of the number and type of merits a student gains during the year. The school year has been divided into 4 blocks of about 10 weeks each so there are two blocks each semester.

Breaches of the PB4L Expectations

While the primary focus of the Behaviour Management Procedure is to encourage and reinforce positive behaviour, on occasion the school will need to respond to unacceptable behaviour through a system of consequences. Corporal punishment is not part of the Behaviour Management System at the school and is not used at any time by the school.

Student action that breaches the Code of Conduct must be dealt with. Each teacher has the authority to maintain order in the classroom. Breaches may be referred from the teacher firstly to the House Leader or Level Leader, then if necessary, to the Head of School, and then to the Discipline Committee.

Breaches of the PB4L expectations, particularly classroom and playground misdemeanours, are handled by the teacher through a restorative approach, based on the value that the student is struggling to show.

Students whose behaviour is impacted by learning difficulties will be supported by the Learning Support Coordinator.

Under most circumstances, when a student has breached the PB4L expectations, the student will be reminded of the appropriate behaviour to demonstrate the value. After the second breach, then a process of re-teaching will take place coupled with a warning of the consequences should a third breach occur. After the third breach, a consequence will be given. As part of this, a restorative conversation will occur between the students, or student and teacher (see below).

Restorative Practice

Students who breach PB4L expectations are supported to restore the damage they have caused through their behaviour choices. Usually this starts with a conversation that covers the following key points:

- What happened?
- Who was affected and how are they feeling?
- How do we fix it? (including co-constructed consequences)
- If this occurs again, what is a fair next step? (co-constructed)

There are some circumstances where, due to the serious nature of the behaviour, a consequence will be given immediately without prior warning. Offences and consequences will be noted by the teacher

in SEQTA. Students may also be given a lunchtime learning session for major work not completed.

Students whose behaviour is impacted by learning difficulties will be supported by the Learning Support Coordinator and their consequences will be appropriate to their situation. For more details, please see our Student Behaviour Policy

Further Support

A student may be required to be on a Behaviour Intervention Plan (known as a HUG card in Primary) if the student's behaviour breaches PB4L expectations and has not decreased in frequency and/or severity with initial restorative steps.

A student will remain on a Behaviour Intervention Plan for the allocated time (usually no less than two weeks) and must maintain the required level of desirable conduct as indicated on the report. Failure to do so may result in the time of the Behaviour Intervention Plan being extended or the student being referred to the Discipline Committee for further consequences.

Confiscation of Items

A teacher is entitled to request a student to hand in any item presenting a safety concern. Using personal technology contrary to the IT Acceptable Use Agreement or a student breaching the uniform code by wearing items that do not comply with guidelines will be subject to the item being held by the school for a period of time. Generally, the times are as follows:

1st breach held until the end of the day

2nd breach held for a week

Confiscated items are to be collected from reception by the student's parent or guardian.

Gross Misconduct

Gross misconduct may involve repeated breaches of the PB4L expectations. It can also include a single incident. Suspension may result directly from gross misconduct at the discretion of the Principal after reference to the College Discipline Committee. Actions that may incur such discipline include the following:

1. The use of, handling, possessing (vaping) and/or supplying others with tobacco, alcohol, e-cigarettes or illegal items and/or substances.
2. Using, handling or possessing dangerous items at school (including but not limited to matches, cigarette lighters and weapons).
3. Gambling or the possession of materials to be used for the intent of gambling.
4. Using profane or indecent language.
5. Possessing, displaying, transmitting and/or distributing materials or images of a pornographic or obscene nature in any form.
6. Dishonesty in any form.
7. Harassment (including physical, verbal, sexual, emotional, racial) of another person, including a student, staff, or member of the public.
8. Willful damage to or destruction of College property, or the personal property of others.
9. Tampering with College equipment or alarm systems.
10. Undermining the religious ideals and faith held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
11. Improper sexual conduct.
12. Conspiracy to perform or participate in initiations or any other act that may injure, degrade, or disgrace a fellow student and/or reflect poorly on the reputation of the College.
13. Defiance or insubordination to any staff.
14. Possession of materials or paraphernalia and/or involvement in practices linked to the occult, wicca and/or witchcraft.

15. A breach of the ICT Acceptable Use Agreement.
16. Using electronic means to engage in any of the above activities.

Details of student involvement in any of the above behaviour will be brought to the Discipline Committee for further action which may include suspension or a recommendation to the College Council that the student be expelled. If a student is suspended more than once in a calendar year, in consultation with the parents and the Discipline Committee, the case may be referred to the College Advisory Council who will consider the student's status in the school and provide recommendations.

The Discipline Committee

This committee, with the Principal as chairperson, is appointed at the beginning of each year and its duty is to consider serious breaches of the Code of Conduct. The Discipline Committee is comprised of the Principal, Head of School, Classroom or Homeroom Teacher, Wellbeing Officer or Coordinator, and may include additional relevant staff or College Captains where appropriate. The Discipline Committee will review the breach and recommend a course of action to the Principal.

Refer to the College Student Behaviour Policy, the Tier 3 Discipline Committee Procedures and the Suspension and Expulsion Policy.

Suspension Policy

Students may be suspended on the following grounds:

- The student's gross misconduct or continual disobedience interferes with the learning of classmates and/or is a harmful, dangerous example to other students.
- The student's behaviour may lead to serious harm.
- All avenues of the Behaviour Management Policy procedures have been exhausted.

There are two types of suspension:

1. Suspension for a specified period.
2. Suspension for an unspecified period.

The Principal, following a recommendation of the College Discipline Committee, may suspend any student for either a specified period of time or for an unspecified period of time. *Refer to the College Suspension and Expulsion Policy.*

Suspension for a Specified Period

Incidents of the type listed above are initially reviewed by the College Discipline Committee which may choose to recommend to the Principal to suspend the student/s for a specified period of time. No student may incur more than one suspension of this type in any calendar year.

Subsequent offences are automatically referred to the Principal who may reconvene the Discipline Committee.

Options available to the Principal include in-school or out-of-school suspension. With an in-school suspension, the student is required to attend school but completes other set work instead of attending scheduled classes. A student may not attend school during the period of an out-of-school suspension. The College may support the student while off campus with set curriculum tasks relevant to the student's year level of study.

A student may be required to complete certain specified tasks before re-entry into classes at the end of a suspension.

Suspension for an Unspecified Period

In the event of an unspecified period of suspension, the Principal or delegate may refer the issue to the College Council for a recommendation. The Principal or delegate will present a full written report

to the College Council for consideration and recommendation. Possible outcomes are noted in the Suspension and Expulsion Policy.

Uniform

The wearing of the school uniform contributes significantly to school tone. The wearing of the regulation uniform is compulsory at College functions, while at school, and while travelling to and from school.

Students are to take pride in their personal appearance. The uniform items are to be worn in a neat and tidy manner, with items well-maintained. This includes winter uniform shirts being buttoned and tucked in.

Summer uniform is required for Terms 1 and 4, and Winter uniform is required for Terms 2 and 3.

T-shirts worn underneath shirts or dresses must be plain white and not visible at the neck, below the sleeves, or through garment material. Shorts worn under dresses must be plain navy or black and not visible below the uniform hemline.

Students who have come to school in breach of the College appearance guidelines may be sent home until compliance is achieved.

Jewellery

Jewellery is generally not permitted with school uniform apart from the following items:

- One pair of small, plain gold or silver studs (maximum one per ear)
- Watch
- Medical alert bracelet (if required)

No other piercings are allowed. A student may be required to hand in the jewellery item/s that are worn that do not comply with these guidelines for retention by the school for a set period. If an exemption is required for religious purposes, parents must apply to the principal at principal@merndahills.vic.edu.au. See the Student Appearance Policy for details.

School Hats

Students generally must have a Mernda Hills hat (primary) or cap (secondary) for outdoor activities for in Terms 1 and 4 including, but not limited to:

- Recess and Lunch
- PE classes and Sport (as applicable)
- Excursions

Hat wearing exemptions may be granted on application to the Principal based on religious and other reasons. The Principal has the final say regarding the wearing of uniform items. If a student does not have a school hat whilst outside during the lunch break they need to go to the library or another covered area.

Non-Uniform Days

Non-uniform days are usually requested by the SRC for a particular community purpose. These will occur only on an irregular and occasional basis, and participation is optional. Students contribute a gold coin donation for a charity or purpose decided by the SRC. Parents and students will be notified

prior to a non-uniform day to confirm the details. Sport carnival days are NOT non-uniform days.

Casual clothes must be neat and modest. For example, singlet tops and very short skirts or shorts must not be worn (no midriff tops, no 'spaghetti tops', no shorts or dresses higher than one hand's width above the knee). No tightfitting pants, leggings or jeggings. Hats are still required for non-uniform days during Summer terms, and shoes should still be appropriate for a school setting. College rules regarding jewellery and adornment (hair, make-up, etc.), still apply.

Safety guidelines apply for non-uniform days and a student should bring and wear closed footwear for the following classes: Science, Food, Design & Technology and PE/Sport.

See 'Casual Clothes Policy' for more details.

School Bag

All students are required to have the Mernda Hills Christian College school bag as a standard uniform item. School bags are kept in students' lockers during the day. An optional additional lightweight school bag is available from the uniform shop for use when on excursions.

Sport Uniform

This is worn on the following occasions:

- On scheduled sport days unless students are informed of other requirements for a particular day.
- All day at Inter-House Sport carnivals including Swimming, Athletics and Cross-Country.
- All day if participating in SSV daytime carnivals.
- All day when a student has a PE class listed in their timetable.
- When invited to do so by a teacher for sports training during lunchtime.

If a student is unable to wear the required uniform, a note from home is necessary.

Supplier of School Uniforms

Uniform articles are obtainable from A Plus Schoolwear.

Online: www.aplusschoolwear.com.au

Retail showroom: Unit 3, 30 Heaths Court, Mill Park

Hours: 9am-5pm Monday to Thursday, 9am-3pm Friday

Second hand uniform items are able to be posted and purchased by families online via the [Sustainable School Shop](#).

Uniform Expectations

Uniform for Primary Students

Compulsory items for all students

- Black polishable leather lace-up shoes (Velcro or buckle black leather shoes are permitted for Foundation students only).
- Uniform hat (when outside in Term 1 & 4).
- Uniform softshell jacket (worn with sport and academic uniforms).
- Uniform tie (in winter).

Optional items for all students

- Uniform woollen jumper.

| ● Uniform scarf or beanie (in winter only). | | |
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| | Regular Uniform for Girls | Regular Uniform for Boys |
| Summer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform dress that covers the knees OR uniform white blouse/shirt with uniform navy pants. *Plain navy or black bike shorts are recommended to be worn under dresses. Plain white socks that cover the ankle. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform blue shirt. Uniform grey trousers/shorts. Plain grey socks that cover the ankle. |
| Winter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform pinafore OR navy uniform pants. Uniform white blouse/shirt. Plain navy tights or socks that cover the ankle. | |
| Sport | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform tracksuit pants. Uniform polo shirt. Uniform rugby top (optional). Uniform pants, shorts or skirt. Uniform socks OR plain white socks that cover the ankle. Supportive runners with cushioned soles. When swimming: a one-piece bathing suit. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform tracksuit pants. Uniform polo shirt. Uniform rugby top (optional). Uniform pants or shorts. Uniform socks OR plain white socks that cover the ankle. Supportive runners with cushioned soles. When swimming: board shorts. |
| General Notes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform items are those with the Mernda Hills shield or 'MH' on them or use the approved pattern/style. Plain items are those that have no designs or logos, or have only the 'MH' insignia. All shirts/blouses must be tucked-into skirts or trousers/shorts, not folded or rolled. Only plain white singlets or t-shirts are to be worn beneath school shirts/blouses - they must remain hidden. No hoodies or coloured shirts. | | |

| Uniform for Secondary Students | | |
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| Compulsory items for all students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black polishable, leather lace-up shoes. Uniform blazer (worn with academic uniform on campus and during transit to and from school. Not necessary to wear on campus in hot weather). Uniform hat (when outside in Term 1 & 4). Uniform tie (worn with all shirts). | | |
| Optional items for all students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform woollen jumper. Uniform scarf or beanie (in winter only). | | |
| | Regular Uniform for Girls | Regular Uniform for Boys |
| Summer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform dress that covers the knees OR uniform white blouse/shirt with uniform navy pants. Plain white socks that cover the ankle. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform white shirt. Uniform grey trousers. Plain grey socks that cover the ankle. |
| Winter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform white blouse/shirt. Uniform skirt that covers the knees OR navy uniform pants. Plain navy socks that cover the ankle. Plain navy tights or socks that cover the ankle. | |

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| Sport | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uniform tracksuit pants. ● Uniform polo shirt. ● Uniform softshell jacket. ● Uniform rugby top (optional). ● Uniform shorts OR skirt. ● Uniform socks OR plain white socks that cover the ankle. ● Supportive runners with cushioned soles. ● When swimming: a one-piece bathing suit. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uniform tracksuit pants. ● Uniform polo shirt. ● Uniform softshell jacket. ● Uniform rugby top (optional). ● Uniform shorts. ● Uniform socks OR plain white socks that cover the ankle. ● Supportive runners with cushioned soles. ● When swimming: board shorts. |
| General Notes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uniform items are those with the Mernda Hills shield or 'MH' on them or use the approved pattern/style. ● Plain items are those that have no designs or logos, or have only the 'MH' insignia. ● All shirts/blouses must be tucked-into skirts or trousers/shorts, not folded or rolled. ● Only plain white singlets or t-shirts are to be worn beneath school shirts/blouses - they must remain hidden. No hoodies or coloured shirts. | | |

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| Student Appearance for all students |
| <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personal hygiene is to be maintained, including daily washing, oral care and deodorant (for older students or as needed). ● The condition of uniforms should be clean and well-maintained (no rips, tears, fraying). <p>Hair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hair for girls should be neat with natural colours. It is to be tied or pinned away from face (tied when working near machinery). ● Hair for boys should be a neat, conservative cut with natural colours, no longer than collar, and not protruding onto the face. ● Students should not have facial hair and must be clean shaven (unless a cultural/religious exemption is granted). ● All hair accessories should be kept to a minimum and must be plain navy, black or white. <p>Jewellery and adornment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For girls, only one silver or gold stud in each ear lobe is permitted. For boys, no ear adornment. ● No other body piercings are permitted. ● Any skin care products/make-up are to be applied to appear natural; that is no extremes of colour or shade (for example, dark red cheeks, black lips or green eye lids). ● Nails must be clean and short. Coloured nail polish and false nails are not permitted. <p>Casual days</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No low-cut (showing shoulders/chest) or high-cut (showing midriff) tops. ● No singlet or 'spaghetti' tops. ● No brief shorts or dresses (higher than one hand's width above the knee). ● No tight-fitting pants, leggings or 'jeggings'. ● No obscene, offensive, rude or inappropriate words or pictures on clothing. ● Hats are still compulsory when outdoors during summer terms. ● All shoes are to be covered and appropriate for a school setting. ● The College regulations regarding jewellery and adornment, hair, nails, make-up, etc. still apply. ● See <i>Casual Clothes Day Policy</i> for more information. |

Uniform Exemptions

Mernda Hills recognises that there may be cases when students do not wish to meet the student appearance expectations. Reasons may include religious, ethnic or cultural background, health

condition or economic hardship. In these cases, an exemption must be sought.

The Principal is responsible for managing and conducting the exemption process in relation to the Student Appearance Policy. If an exemption is sought, a request should be made to the Principal in writing setting out the grounds for the exemption, any relevant evidence and the modification to the Student Appearance policy that is requested. The Principal will consider the request and seek to come to an agreement that is acceptable to all parties. Such an agreement may include:

- An agreed modification of the dress requirements rather than a complete exemption.
- Setting conditions under which the exemption will be allowed.

Exemptions are not guaranteed and are made on an individual basis, they do not negate the rules and expectations for others.

General Information

Food at Mernda Hills

The provision of food at Mernda Hills is based on the Biblical principles of health and the specifics of the Seventh-day Adventist health message. This involves not only the use of healthy foods but also the avoidance of unhealthy foods. As such all food provided by the college is vegetarian and provides a healthy alternative to students.

The Primary school also has a “Fruit and Veg Only” rule for recess time. This is to encourage students (and parents) to develop better health habits around snacking.

Although encouraging healthy eating at home, the college does not prevent students from bringing foods of their choice to school for their own consumption at lunch time. Sharing food with other students is discouraged.

Canteen

A canteen operates on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays each week throughout the school year.

Lunch ordering is available and orders must be placed through Spriggy Schools. Download the app and follow the prompts to create an account. Primary lunch orders are delivered to the classroom by student representatives. Secondary students may pick up lunch orders from the window.

Car Privileges

Senior students who wish to drive themselves (and siblings) to school must apply in writing to the Principal for permission to do so. Students granted these privileges must have a current and valid Victorian Driver’s Licence and must abide by school conditions which include: parking in designated locations, not using vehicles during school hours and driving safely within the school grounds.

The student may not transport another student without written consent of that student’s parent being given to the Head of Secondary and/or Principal prior to travel. For when students have permission to drive another student the School has a duty of care to ensure ‘Comprehensive Insurance’ is in place for that vehicle and the driver has the appropriate drivers licence.

Chapel, Chaplaincy and Church

Chapel

All students attend a weekly chapel. The program includes presentations on topics such as spiritual, inspirational, student well-being, safety and other themes relevant to students. Students are given the opportunity to participate in a range of ways, including praise and worship leadership.

Chaplain

The College has two chaplains who are available for student welfare issues and family concerns. The Chaplains are involved in the spiritual life of the school, conducting Bible studies with students who request it, organising Chapel speakers and other events during the year.

Mernda Hills Adventist Church

Mernda Hills Adventist Church is an on-campus church that meets on Saturday (Sabbath) mornings. We meet at 10:30 am in the Acacia Room. The membership is made up of staff, student and community families and anyone is welcome to attend. The program includes singing, prayer, Bible study and sharing time.

Mernda Youth

Mernda Youth is a Friday afternoon or evening worship time for secondary students and youth of the Mernda Hills Adventist Church. Students are involved in organising and running Mernda Youth events with the support of the Chaplaincy team.

Mernda Youth events are supervised by the chaplaincy team. Student attendance is optional. Parents arrange transport to and from Mernda Youth. Locations include the Acacia room, library, or outside the Middle School. Parents are welcome to accompany their child when they arrive at Mernda Youth, however parents do not attend the program.

Occasionally, our sister schools (e.g. Edinburgh College) may advertise their own events to students of the College. Mernda Hills students are welcome to attend other school events, however this is not a formal arrangement and is left to the parents discretion. Supervision arrangements are the same for all events at other schools.

Wellbeing

The Wellbeing team is committed to ensuring that all individual students' cognitive, emotional, social, physical and spiritual wellbeing are met. The team works collaboratively with students, teachers and families to address the wellbeing of students, by implementing proactive strategies to achieve positive outcomes and academic success.

The Counsellor works with students from Foundation to Year 12, who are experiencing challenges either at home and at school. The purpose of the Counsellor is to work with students through difficult times to help them develop a strong level of personal and social wellbeing.

The counsellor offers support via:

- Short term, solution focussed counselling therapy.
- Providing individual sessions, classroom lessons or in-group sessions.
- Focussing on areas: social skills, friendships, resolving conflicts, developing self-confidence & responsibility, self-esteem, dealing with grief & loss, dealing with bullying, stress management, family relationships, developing a growth-mindset, mindfulness & coping skills, positive communication, self-regulation and many more.

Lost Property

In order to assist the return of lost items to their rightful owners, parents are urged to sew name tags on all items of clothing and to name all other property clearly with a permanent marker. Lost uniform items are held in designated lost property areas for student collection. Unclaimed property will be disposed of after a reasonable time. The College cannot accept responsibility for loss of items by students.

Communication

Communication with parents is via the SEQTA portal, text messages, Consent2Go and emails. Some correspondence will also be mailed to parents. **If there is a change to any of your personal details, please ensure you notify the school promptly to ensure you do not miss any important communication.** The school website and newsletters are also a valuable source of information, and are kept up to date with details about upcoming school events.

General communication from the College can be expected between the hours of 8:00am and 5:00pm, Monday-Friday.

Mernda Hills website and calendar

<https://merndahills.vic.edu.au/>

SEQTA portals

SEQTA is the Learning Management System used at Mernda Hills Christian College.

- **Student portal:** SEQTA Learn (for Secondary students and upper Primary)
- **Parent portal:** SEQTA Engage (for all families)

Portals for students and parents allow easy access to the following information:

- Student timetables
- Daily notices
- End of Semester reports
- Merits
- Links to
 - College calendar
 - College website
 - Course overviews

Student access to their SEQTA Learn portal is facilitated at the start of the year.

Parents can access the SEQTA Engage portal, by [clicking this link](#) and entering the username and password they created when they activated the account.

To set up the SEQTA App:

- Download the SEQTA Engage mobile app from the App Store (Apple) or Google Play (Android).
- Open the app and scroll through the welcome and information about the app.
- On the Add Account page click on the bottom right Manual setup. This will then ask you to Enter the school's SEQTA Engage URL. Our SEQTA Engage URL is <https://merndahills.cp.adventist.edu.au/>
- From there, you should be able to log in using your username and password.

If a parent has not set up an account, they will need to email admin@merndahills.vic.edu.au to receive a welcome email. Parents of new students will receive a welcome email when the student

commences.

To reset a SEQTA Engage password

Email admin@merndahills.vic.edu.au with a request to reset your password. Note: the reset link is active for only a short period from the time the reset email is sent to the parent.

Newsletters

A newsletter, informing parents and students of current and upcoming events is emailed regularly to parents. It is not posted on our website to protect the privacy of our students.

School Policies

The School has a number of policies in place that outline processes and procedures that address compliance requirements and affect various aspects of school life. Policies relevant to parents and the wider community are available on the school website.

Parent Events

A range of events are planned each year to facilitate communication between parents and the school and to give parents the opportunity to participate in the life of the school.

These events include Information Evenings, Dedication Night, Parent-Teacher Interviews, Awards Ceremonies and other events. These are published in one or more of the following methods: the Mernda Hills calendar, newsletters or via the school email/SMS service.

Information Evenings

Information Evenings enable the school to share information about the unique aspects of the school program. Refer to the College calendar.

Dedication Night

As a Christian school, and consistent with the school motto of 'Nothing without God', we conduct a program early in the school year to commit the school program, participants and school families to God's direction and protection for the school year. The whole school community is invited to attend.

Other Events

Upcoming events are flagged in the newsletter and appear in the calendar. Events will be communicated during the year as events are planned and confirmed.

Parent Notes

Written parent communication is required to inform the school regarding relevant matters.

Absence from School

If a student is going to be absent from school for any reason, the parent or guardian should ring or email the school by 9.30am to advise of this absence (email admin@merndahills.vic.edu.au). If the school has not been notified of a student's absence by 9.30am, parents will receive an SMS from the School to advise that their student is marked absent and will need to call the school for confirmation.

If phone or email contact has not been made, a note of explanation signed by the parent needs to be presented to the Front Office as formal confirmation of the absence. The note is needed so the school can fulfil the requirement it has to keep absence notes to support the formal school record of attendance.

Out of Uniform

If an irregular/occasional situation arises that a student is unable to wear the school uniform required for the day, then a signed note of explanation by a parent/guardian needs to be presented at Student Reception to obtain a uniform pass obtained for the day.

Privacy

Personal Information is collected and used by Mernda Hills Christian College to:

- Provide services or to carry out the School's statutory functions.
- Assist the School services and its staff to fulfil its duty of care to students.
- Plan, resource, monitor and evaluate School services and functions.
- Comply with reporting requirements of Adventist Schools Victoria, government departments and authorities.
- Comply with statutory and or other legal obligations in respect of staff.
- Investigate incidents or defend any legal claims against the School, its services or its staff.
- Comply with laws that impose specific obligations regarding the handling of personal information.

For further information refer to the Privacy Policy found on the school website.

Procedures for Very Hot Days

There is no government or practical requirement to close the School on very hot days therefore no maximum temperature limit is prescribed for school operation.

On very hot days, the College implements the following strategies for the health and comfort of students:

- All classrooms are air-conditioned. Lessons will take place in classrooms.
- At lunchtime, vigorous outdoor play is not permitted and movement outdoors may be restricted.
- At lunchtime, air-conditioned classrooms are opened and supervised for students to play games, have lunch and chat in cool conditions.

School Photos

Individual and class photographs are taken once each year as a pictorial record for each year group. Students may choose to order prints of these photos. Details will appear in the College newsletter and Website calendar. Class group photos will be reproduced in the College Yearbook.

Use of Student Images

Part of the enrolment process will involve seeking permission for use of student images in a range of external publications including hard copy and electronic. Parental permission is not required for internal publications such as the yearbook. Parents may make a request in writing if they wish for their child's image to be excluded from internal publications.

Sickness or Accident

If a student becomes sick or sustains an injury, they should report immediately to the class or duty

teacher. If necessary, the teacher will give permission for the student to be absent from class to see the College First Aid Officer who will provide support as required. Students may be sent home if they are found to be too ill to attend classes. It is the responsibility of the parent to organise transport and care if their child is unwell.

Where the matter is regarded as serious, the student will be taken to a doctor or to a hospital and the parents will be notified as quickly as possible. A student will be taken to hospital by ambulance if deemed necessary. An Incident Report will be completed by the teacher in charge and given to the Head of School. All family ambulance subscriptions and Medicare details must be kept up to date through Consent 2 Go.

Students who are unwell before school are advised to stay at home. Students who have diarrhoea or vomiting should not come to school for 24 hours after their last episode of either.

Please note the section on Insurance earlier in the Handbook that particularly applies to accidental injury that occurs outside of school hours.

Student ID Cards

Secondary Students are issued with a photo ID card confirming that the student attends Mernda Hills Christian College. Students should bring their ID card on school excursions and also to VCE exams.

Telephone Calls

There is a phone available for student use at Front Reception and is only to be used outside of class time with permission from staff. Students may at times be invited by teachers to use their personal mobile phones for school activities and excursions, but otherwise the use of mobile phones is not permitted. Parents are requested not to contact students on students' phones during school hours. Where necessary, please call the office where messages will be taken and passed on to students during recess or lunch break.

Valuables

Students are advised not to bring valuables to school. Students are to keep belongings secured in lockers and kept locked at all times. These items are not covered by the school insurance policy. No responsibility can be taken if items are lost or removed from bags or lockers.

Visitors

All visitors must report to Front Reception to request permission to enter the School. The Principal, Head of School or delegate has the right to refuse entry. If entry is granted, and after signing a register, a visitor's pass is issued which the visitor must display at all times while on campus. Under most conditions evidence of a current Working with Children check will be required and a copy kept at the School. If a visitor is working in any capacity at the College (either paid or voluntary) they must also satisfy government compliance directives by completing the Mernda Hills Christian College employee or volunteer induction process.

A visitor is restricted in the visit to the time and location related to the purpose of the visit. The School retains the right to withdraw the visitor's pass at any time during the visit and require the visitor to leave the campus.

The provisions of the visitor's pass are intended for individuals with legitimate business at the College. Unauthorised persons on College grounds will be asked to leave.

Emergencies and Drills

The College acts to minimise the harm caused by emergencies when they occur by establishing clear policies and procedures. The document covering all emergency occurrences is the College's Emergency Management Plan. This details what to do before, during and after a range of critical incidents.

All classrooms contain an Emergency Action Plan which outlines the procedures to follow in case of an emergency. These are clearly marked and ensure that everyone can be informed of what to do in an emergency.

The College runs a number of emergency drills during the year to ensure all students and teachers are aware of procedures, and to keep up with regulations.

Resolution of Concerns and Grievances

Parents

The College welcomes the opportunity to resolve a parent concern at the first instance. Please contact the relevant administrator (see the Administration section early in this handbook).

If needed, the parent may refer the matter for further examination to the relevant Coordinator, Head of School, the Principal and then Adventist Schools Victoria.

Mernda Hills Christian College has Guidelines for Parents with Complaints posted on the school website and all parents are welcome to view this.

Students

Students who have a grievance with the College are able to have their grievances dealt with through the following procedures. Students must work through the various levels as outlined below.

1. An interview with the classroom/homeroom Teacher and/or the Chaplain.
2. If the grievance is not resolved at the interview, the student will discuss the matter with the Head of School, who may discuss the matter with the Principal or leadership team if not resolved.
3. The hearing of the dispute before an independent panel which has been appointed by the School Council.
4. If the student or the School feels that the grievance resolution is unsatisfactory, either party may request the involvement of an external panel by contacting the Chief Executive Officer of Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Victoria) Ltd.

Handbook Amendments

The College reserves the right to amend the contents and procedures outlined in this Handbook.