Berengarra School

Hope Belonging Nurturing Success

When School Needs to Feel Different

A guide for families, carers and students

The Berengarra BELONG Model®

The BELONG Model is a whole-school framework that involves students, staff members, families, and the wider community. By facilitating a shared sense of purpose and responsibility, it emphasises relational safety, breaks down traditional barriers to education, supports inclusive learning, and treats each student as a unique individual. This approach gives every young person the confidence and independence to navigate their journey through school and beyond.

B  **Building Relationships**

E  **Engagement**

L  **Learning Community**

O  **Overcoming Challenges**

N  **Navigate**

G  **Growth**

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Before I found Berengarra School I was a school refuser... I hated school so much, it felt like a prison to me. I would cry myself to sleep thinking that the next day I would have to go to school.

Then my parents stumbled across Berengarra School.

I now attend school every day, have heaps of friends and don't shut people out... when I say Berengarra School is a lifesaver, I really mean it.

– Laura, former student

Our Values

We exist for students like Laura.

At Berengarra School, we see those students.

We were built for them.

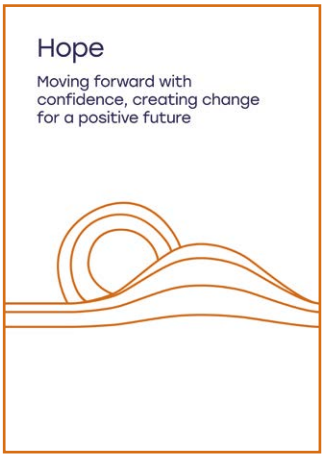
Since 1977, Berengarra School has offered a different kind of education, one where wellbeing comes first, learning is personalised, and no young person is judged or dismissed based on what they've been through.

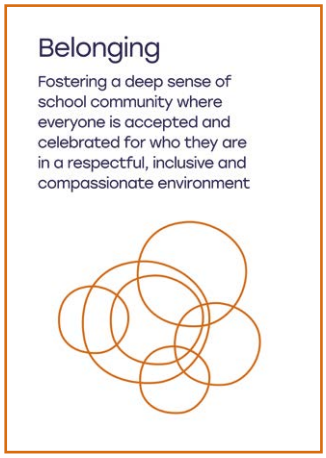
We are not a mainstream school with just a few extra supports.

We are a specialist school where support is the foundation of everything we do.

Here at school, students are welcomed into calm spaces, cared for by kind, highly trained, professional staff, and provided with a timetable designed to work with them, rather than against them.

We remove the pressure of uniforms and homework, creating routines that feel predictable and safe. Together, we learn at a pace suitable for each individual student.









Who We Support

Berengarra School exists for students who haven't felt safe, understood, or included in other settings.

We work with capable young people who:

- Feel overwhelmed or unsafe at school
- Have stopped attending or are at risk of dropping out
- Are neurodivergent (e.g. ADHD, autism)
- Have experienced trauma, anxiety, depression or emotional shutdown
- Benefit from structured, relational and flexible support

But this is only part of the picture. Our students may also be:

- LGBTQIA+
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- From culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Living with disability or learning differences
- Managing social or economic hardship
- Living with experiences of family violence, neglect or instability

We recognise that many students hold multiple identities that intersect in complex ways. We see them as whole people, not a diagnosis or a label.



A Day at Berengarra

For many of our students, school mornings used to feel like something to survive.

No homework	‘Cool off’ room	No uniform
Later start at 9:30am	Finish at 2:40pm	

We’ve reshaped the school day to feel calm, consistent, and achievable, especially for those who’ve found mainstream settings overwhelming.

What a typical day looks like:

- Box Hill Campus opens at **9:00 AM** and students are welcomed by staff. Breakfast is available upon request.
- Chadstone Campus opens at **9:15 AM** and students start to arrive and are welcomed by staff. Breakfast is available upon request.
- **9:30 AM** – The day begins with Home Group, giving students time to settle in and connect
- Four lessons per day, with generous breaks between for movement, food and regulation
- **2:40 PM** – School finishes early enough to reduce fatigue and transition anxiety
- **2:45 PM** – At the Box Hill Campus, the school bus heads to Box Hill Station to drop off students who are taking public transport home

Support & Wellbeing

Students don’t leave their emotions at the school gate, and we don’t expect them to.

Many of our students arrive carrying anxiety, trauma, or a long history of feeling unsafe at school.

Some haven’t attended in months. Some mask all day and crash at home. Some lash out when they’re overwhelmed, while others shut down when they’re expected to perform.

We see behaviour as communication. When a student is struggling, we respond with curiosity, not punishment.

What support looks like

Every student is known not just by their teacher, but by the whole staff team. Support is part of the structure:

- Full-time counsellors at both campuses
- Education Support staff in every classroom
- Safety and wellbeing plans where needed
- Crisis support, check-ins and quiet spaces available throughout the day
- Relational and trauma-aware practice embedded across the school





Box Hill Campus

Our Box Hill Campus, Years 7 - 10 cater for up to 50 students, with small class sizes, calm spaces, and trauma-aware staff.

In these early secondary years, alongside teaching the Victorian Curriculum, we focus on rebuilding engagement and helping students experience success in a safe, structured way with a strong focus on skill building across all subjects.

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Maths (STEAM)
- Technologies: Food
- Technology
- The Arts (Drama and Visual Arts)
- Humanities
- Physical Education and Health
- Health and Wellbeing, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)



Literacy

Students need more than just technical skills.

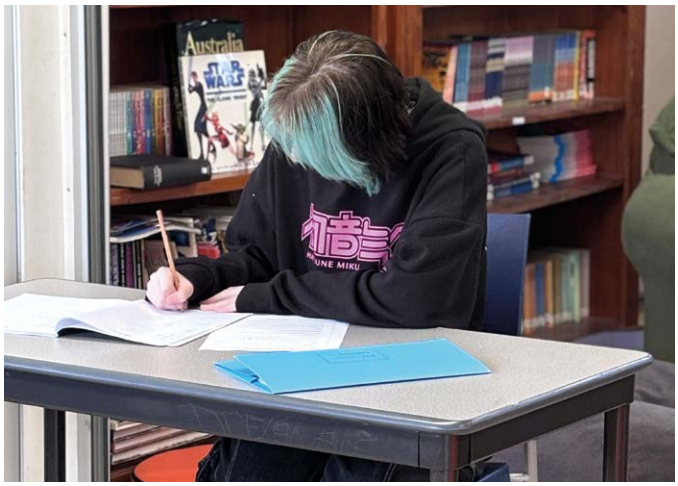
They need to become critical thinkers, imaginative problem-solvers, and thoughtful communicators.

Whether building friendships or preparing for future workplaces, we support students in becoming ethical, informed, and active members of their communities.

In these early secondary years, alongside teaching the Victorian Curriculum, we focus on rebuilding engagement and helping students experience success in a safe, structured way with a strong focus on skill building across all subjects.

We focus on:

- Strengthening core skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening
- Extending vocabulary and developing confident editing skills
- Improving spelling and comprehension
- Using class discussions to explore diverse ideas and perspectives



Numeracy

Many of our students need to reengage with maths in a way that feels achievable, relevant and safe.

We focus on building confidence, curiosity and everyday problem solving.

We support students to rebuild trust in their own abilities, especially if they've had negative experiences with maths in the past.

We focus on:

- Strengthening foundational skills in number, time, money and measurement
- Building confidence through real-world maths experiences
- Encouraging reasoning, flexible thinking and testing of hypotheses
- Supporting a growth mindset in every lesson

Science, Technology & Engineering

Students learn by investigating, building and problem-solving.

Weekly extended classes allow time for hands-on exploration, curiosity and critical thinking.

We design learning experiences that are engaging, achievable and inquiry-based, helping students re-engage with learning through doing.

We focus on:

- Catering to individual ability and interest
- Physical, Life, Earth, and Space Sciences
- Asking big questions
- Making predictions
- Designing investigations
- Exploring key sciences
- Interpreting data
- Connecting to real life

Social Emotional Learning

Weekly SEL classes focus on students' overall wellbeing and their ability to participate positively in social life both at school and beyond.

We focus on:

- Communication skills
- Emotional regulation
- Helpful thinking and self-talk
- Positive mental health habits
- Self-esteem
- Conflict resolution
- The law
- Character strengths
- Career education
- Nutrition

Art & Design

Students explore painting, sculpture, printmaking, and design.

More importantly, they learn to take creative risks, manage frustration, and express identity in safe and supported ways.

We focus on:

- Broadening students' experiences with excursions to galleries and exhibitions
- Completing 2D and 3D artworks using a range of materials
- Exploring harmony, tone, line and composition using colour and design theories







Humanities

Students participate in weekly lessons from the subject areas of History, Geography, Economics, Civics and Citizenship.

Students extend their understanding of the world around them from local, national, and international perspectives to develop a sense of global citizenship. Students build research, inquiry, analysis, critique, exploration and evaluation.

We focus on:

- Interpreting maps
- Investigating geographical features of Australian states
- Analysing different perspectives
- Evaluating the role of a significant First Nations person
- The roles and responsibilities of Government
- The values of Australia's democracy
- Influences of consumer choices
- Rights and responsibilities of consumers and businesses

P.E & Health

Physical Education is about confidence, regulation and social connection.



Weekly P.E classes provide each student a chance to participate and develop resilience, stamina, and wellbeing through sport.

Activities include frisbee, cricket, archery, basketball, badminton, bush walking and golf.

We focus on:

- Participation
- Following instructions
- Asking questions
- Expanding skills and knowledge
- Following rules
- Contributing to classes

Food Technology



In Food Tech, students learn about independent living skills and nutrition through practical activities.

Every Thursday, students plan, organise, and take pride in feeding themselves and others. It's structured, supported, and full of achievable wins.

We focus on:

- Food hygiene and safety
- Problem solving
- Independent living skills
- Basic nutrition
- Decision-making skills

Years 7-10 Assessment Overview

When a student joins Berengarra School, we begin **by understanding their starting point**, not just academically, but in terms of confidence, engagement and readiness to learn.

Each student completes an initial assessment to help us identify their learning level across core areas. This informs their Education Support Plan (ESP), developed in partnership with the student, their family and their teachers. The ESP is updated throughout the year as student progress is made and needs evolve.

We use formative assessment and gentle, ongoing check-ins to guide teaching. There are no high-pressure tests or exams in Years 7–10. We know that traditional assessments can be stressful and overwhelming, especially for students with a history of disengagement or trauma.

Instead, teachers track progress through skills-based work:

- Classroom conversations and observations
- Visual tasks, quizzes and project work
- Practical demonstrations
- Collaboration, problem solving and critical thinking
- Communication skills and participation

Every student receives constructive feedback and the chance to revisit tasks and build confidence. Student achievement reports are produced at the conclusion of each semester.



Chadstone Campus

Our Year 11-12 Senior Campus in Chadstone accommodates up to 30 students and provides a calm, structured environment focused on practical learning, confidence, and future planning.

What Senior Learning looks like

Flexible, Supported, Individualised

We offer flexible learning options for students who need a different approach to school. Our Chadstone Campus offers flexible pathways informed by trauma-aware practice, designed to build confidence, skills, and work readiness.

VICTORIAN PATHWAYS CERTIFICATE (VPC)

- A recognised senior certificate with hands-on learning
- A supported option to build skills and confidence
- Focus on literacy, numeracy, personal development and work skills
- Usually completed over 2-3 years
- Students can transition into further study/ training

VCE VOCATIONAL MAJOR (VM)

- A recognised senior certificate with hands-on learning
- Project-based work, community involvement, applied skills
- Includes VET training and real world work experience
- Prepares students for further education work or other post school pathways

VET & SBATS

Practical training and experience.



Vocational Education & Training (VET)

- Students complete nationally recognised Certificate II or III qualifications in Retail or Community Services
- Delivered on site in partnership with Flexible Training Solutions and IVET
- Includes practical, job-focused units like communication and workplace teamwork
- Embedded into both VPC and VCE VM programs

School-Based Apprenticeships & Traineeships (SBATS)

- For retail students ready to take the next step into external paid work
- Combines school learning with one day per week of industry based training and employment, which can be completed at our cafe open to the public.

Unique to Berengarra: A flexible three-year option

Some students complete their senior program over three years instead of two.

This helps:

- Reduce stress and pressure
- Maintain engagement through life changes or mental health needs

Because success doesn't always follow a straight line. At Berengarra School, we work with the student, not the system.

CafEducation

Hands-on learning environment to develop practical skills, confidence, and real-world experience in a supported setting.

CafEducation is Berengarra School's café, that's open to the public, and a key part of the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) and VCE Vocational Major (VM) programs.



VET in Retail and Barista Training

In partnership with Flexible Training Solutions (FTS), students can complete Certificate II and III in Retail while working in a functioning café environment. Under the guidance of our school's VET Teacher and Café Manager, students build industry-specific skills in barista work, food safety, and customer service.

Pathways through Work and Training

CafEducation also supports students to undertake School-Based Apprenticeships or Traineeships (SBATs), allowing them to combine part-time paid work, formal training, and school-based learning.

Connection & Community

As part of Berengarra's broader community outreach, CafEducation offers Barista Training to students from nearby schools. This allows our more confident students to serve as peer trainers, further developing their leadership and communication skills.

Years 11-12 Assessment Overview

90% of Year 12s graduated with a certificate.

At our Chadstone Campus, assessment becomes more structured but still flexible, supportive and designed to reduce anxiety.

Students work toward either the VCE Vocational Major (VM) or the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC). These pathways include core subjects and applied learning components, such as community projects, work-related tasks and vocational education.

There are no set exams in the VCE, VM or the VPC; rather, assessment is ongoing and portfolio-based, with a strong focus on personal growth, collaboration, and real-world skills. Tasks are clearly scaffolded, and students receive regular feedback with opportunities to revise and improve.

We support students through:

- Clear expectations and visual task breakdowns
- Frequent check-ins with teachers and Education Support staff
- Adjustments to timelines, formats and learning environments
- Options for presenting work in written, oral or practical formats
- Emotional support during higher-pressure tasks

Every student continues to follow an Individual Learning Plan, and no one is left to navigate senior years alone. Our focus is to help each young person succeed in a way that reflects who they are, not just what they can complete on paper.

The goal is to provision students finishing Year 12 with real skills, confidence, and a post-school plan, whether that's further study, training or employment.



Transport & Term Dates

Box Hill Campus: Years 7-10.

- **Train:** Box Hill Train Station is 2.5 km away and a 35-minute walk. Public Bus: 207 Bus from Box Hill Bus Station stops at Alan St/Dorking Rd, then a 4-minute walk (300m). 903 Bus from Doncaster Shopping Centre stops on Station St near the corner of Woodhouse Gr, then approx. 10-minute walk.
- **Walking:** There is a school crossing on Woodhouse Grove.
- **Cycling / Scootering:** Bicycle tracks run along the side of Woodhouse Grove, and bikes/scooters can be stored in storage sheds.
- **Car:** driven by parent or caregiver: Students alight on Harrison St outside the school's front gate.
- **Berengarra School Bus:** Operated by a staff member and accompanied by a second staff member, the bus departs daily at 2:45 PM for Box Hill Train Station/Bus Station.

Chadstone Campus: Years 11-12

- **Train:** Holmesglen Train Station is 1.3 km away and a 17-minute walk.
- **Bus:** 624 Bus from Chadstone Shopping Centre stops at Batesford Rd/Power Ave; a 5-minute walk from there.
- **Walking / Cycling / Scootering:** The Waverley Rail Trail is located 750m away.
- **Car – driven by parent or caregiver:** Students alight at the Power Ave parking lot, located past Batesford Reserve..

Term Dates

- For the latest term dates, please visit: berengarra.vic.edu.au/news-events, or scan the QR code.

What Families & Students Say

Before Berengarra, my son was barely attending school.
He was anxious every morning, often angry, and completely disconnected from learning.
Now, he gets up on time, he talks about what he did that day, and he actually believes he has a future. That shift is everything.

– Parent, Year 9

I used to think I just couldn't do school. I'd get in trouble all the time, even when I was trying. Here, the teachers actually listen.
If I need space, I get it. I don't feel like a problem anymore.

– Student

The staff at Berengarra don't give up on kids. They see behind the behaviour. For the first time in years, we feel like part of a school community, not just a file in someone's office.

– Carer, Chadstone campus

I didn't think I'd ever finish school. I've got a plan now, part time work, a TAFE course, and a support team that actually believes I can do it.

– Student, Year 12

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