



MARGARET RIVER

IndependentsCHOOL

Parent Handbook 2018



Margaret River Independent School (MRIS) was established as Nyindamurra Family School (NFS) in 1982 by a group of parents who had come to the area seeking a 'sea change'. This dedicated group had a vision of providing an alternative to the government school system in which school was an extension of family life and children learned as individuals.

MRIS is an independent school, registered by the Department of Education Services (DES) and follows the Australian Curriculum legislated for all WA schools (SCSA).

At MRIS we believe everyone is capable of learning in a safe and happy environment where children and their families feel welcomed, encouraged, respected and included.

To achieve this we

- provide a dynamic learning environment which is purposeful, challenging and connected to a student's experience, stage of development and background.
- understand that children learn in different ways and at different rates.
- believe that each child is unique with individual strengths, abilities and preferred ways of learning
- recognise that teachers and parents are critical factors in a child's learning success and we all share in the "learning journey"

Our core values are the foundation for all learning, teaching and life – "Our children achieve their best."

MRIS aims to provide a nurturing environment that fosters the development of lifetime learning skills, enabling each child to reach their full potential in cognitive, creative, social, spiritual, physical, language communication and ecological skills.

Our Vision

Margaret River's school of choice for developing the whole child by partnering students, families and quality caring staff.

Welcome to

Margaret River Independent School

Sharing the Learning Journey

MRIS provides a quality learning environment, developing each child's strengths, self-esteem and self-motivation. Our students build social, emotional and personal skills, which accompany them on their journey through life. To this end an atmosphere of mutual respect is fostered between children, staff and parents via the use of the Virtues and Peer Support programmes and the STEP parenting course (Systematic Training in Effective Parenting) offered by the school.

The school's focus on Intrinsic Motivation helps the students develop autonomy, mastery and purpose.

As a small school we can individually tailor interesting and challenging teaching programmes for students. With this child-centred approach, self-esteem and ownership of learning is promoted.

MRIS graduates usually go to Margaret River Senior High School, where they have established a reputation for high standards of learning and achievement. A number of MRIS students have gone on to be head students, duxes and award recipients.

The school is situated in an area of natural bush, and children are encouraged to learn about and care for their environment. There are extensive parkland playing areas for student use. The school owns its buildings and is constantly expanding its facilities, which include the Nyindamurra Performing Arts Centre, five classrooms, a library, dedicated art/science classroom and administration building. There are two playgrounds for Early Learning students and three for Primary students, plus a hard-court.

Little Indies

Discovery School for 3-Year-Olds

Little Indies is a year-long, nature-based program designed to nourish young children and gently introduce them to a learning environment away from the home. As a Pre-Kindy program, it is guided by the Early Years Learning Framework and meets the National Quality Standards. Parents accompany children until their child turns 3 and/or as the child develops confidence and independence. Children participate in all-weather activities, learning about risk and exploring the bush, with a focus on developing resilience, curiosity, imagination and self-awareness. See [Little Indies](#) brochure.

Kindergarten to Year 6

Early Years – Our Introduction to Schooling

MRIS Kindergarten & Pre-Primary provide children with a secure, creative environment in which they can explore and learn through spontaneous play. It is through a combination of this play-based learning and the explicit teaching of literacy and numeracy skills that children develop a strong sense of identity and make connections with their world.

Our kindergarten has been recognised for Best Practice by the Association of Independent Schools WA (AISWA). [Kindergarten/Pre-Primary](#)

Primary

In the Primary years we continue to instil a sense of self-esteem while promoting a mature attitude to study that will carry the child through the more rigorous demands of secondary education.

Curriculum

- MRIS follows the Australian Curriculum. Our teachers follow a Whole School Development Plan which addresses learning areas including English, Maths, Science, History, Geography, Languages, Arts, Economics, Business, Civics, Citizenship, Health, Physical Education, ICT, Design and Technology.
- MRIS is extremely proud of its well-chosen and highly-skilled teachers. Teachers are asked to be flexible, supportive and innovative. They are encouraged to use their own special skills and areas of interest and to utilise the wealth of skills found amongst the parents.
- The school places a high priority on visual and performing arts, and employs specialist teachers in the areas of Language, Visual Art, Music, and Dance and Drama - all professionals in their chosen field. The school is well known, through exhibitions and concerts, for its high standards of performance. Students are offered private musical lessons as well as the opportunity to be part of the popular school band.
- The school runs a French Language Program. MRIS hosts a highly successful French-connection Open Day every second year which is well-attended by the wider community.
- MRIS employs a specialist Sports teacher and students are taught a wide range of sporting skills with an emphasis on fitness and teamwork. Since physical co-ordination is essential to the development of other skills, the school incorporates a Perceptual Motor Program (PMP) into its curriculum. MRIS participates in interschool sporting activities including athletics, soccer and cricket, with small schools in the Capes region. Pre-primary to Year 6 students also take part in annual swimming lessons and in some grades may have additional sessions e.g. yoga, gymnastics and surfing.
- Great importance is attached to outdoor excursions and school camps. Years 2 to 6 attend an annual camp with their teacher. These activities are vital to the educational programme, providing real life experiences in stimulating environments. Parents attending camp are required to obtain a Working with Children Clearance.
- To promote connection within the school, students, teachers and parents participate in a 'walk and talk' activity twice a week before classes commence.
- Tutoring is offered by the school and is highly effective in supporting students with learning difficulties or gifted students. Parental involvement is vital for optimum progress to be achieved by the upper school student.
- A Peer Support Programme on specific modules is conducted for the primary school every year in Term 3. These modules are "dedicated to providing dynamic, peer-led programmes which foster the mental, social and physical wellbeing of young people and their community".
- Home study is recognised at MRIS as a means of extending and consolidating work covered in the classroom. If special tutoring is provided students are required to complete any set home exercises.



Innovative Programmes

Since inception, MRIS continues to incorporate many innovative programmes into its curriculum. Programmes have included:

- The survey of fauna and flora of remnant forest located in the school's bush corridors; a frog conservation project that aims to involve the wider community; and a Global Positioning System (GPS) mapping and poster project 'Rescue a Frog Today (RAFT)' which resulted in MRIS being named as winners of the Asian Pacific Excellence Award, as well as Primary School Winner.
- A documentary of the history of MRIS for the Small Schools History Project.
- STIS programme (Spatial Technology in Schools) Poster Competition.
- Mapping Species in our remnant forest resulting in the publication of our book 'Drawing on Nature – When art meets science!'
- MRIS was awarded the Education Award 2009 by the Cape to Cape Catchment Group. The school has a partnership programme with parents and the community which incorporates spatial science and sustainability. The school's award and prize-winning programme is at the cutting edge of the curriculum. It utilizes G.I.S. as students understand and take care of the biodiversity in the natural forest surrounding the school and map the history of the school grounds.
- Nyindamurra Nature Trail was developed in 2013 by the Year 2/3 class. The trail is an informative walk through bushland adjoining the school, signposted with details of indigenous history, seasons and bush foods. The Year 2/3 class are perennial guardians of the trail, learn to run tours and undertake trail-related projects as part of their studies.
- Bush School was introduced in 2013 in the wake of the Year 2/3 class project development of the Nyindamurra Nature Trail and allows for outdoor nature-based learning.
- Dance Fusion was introduced in 2013. Students from Years 1-6 explore a variety of genres including contemporary dance, jazz, hip hop and breakdancing, with a focus on performance.
- An MRIS ensemble was formed in 2013 and performed at the Margaret River Seniors Expo and the St Thomas More Catholic Church Christmas lunch. The ensemble is ongoing.
- In 2014, a second school band was introduced for students in Years 4/5. This is in addition to the long-running school band for Year 6 students. Both bands and the ensemble perform a mid-year concert for parents and at the school's end-of-year concert.
- Little Indies Discovery School for 3-Year-Olds was introduced in 2014 with an emphasis on nature-based learning.

Behaviour Management

At MRIS our Behaviour Management Policy is based on the STEP Guidelines, The Virtues Programme and Restorative Justice Principles and the PATHS program (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies). Children are guided to find the Virtues they could have used to problem-solve positive alternative behaviours and to plan for restoration and reparation. In the playground there are designated Problem Solving "stoplights" and a step for further consideration and discussion with teachers' guidance.

Student Participation

The upper school students chair a weekly school meeting with agendas and portfolios. This is a platform for all students to gain confidence and learn presentation skills and for students who have excelled to demonstrate their skills. The weekly meetings resolve any issues that have arisen during the week via the Restorative Justice Principles, the Virtues Programme and STEP Principles, as well as plan for fundraising for charities supported by the school (Famine Fighters, Jump Rope for Heart, MS Readathon, Walk Against Want and our World Vision Sponsor Child). All students are encouraged to take on positions of responsibility through elected portfolios e.g. emptying bins, composting, ringing the bell, monitoring the playground, measuring rainfall etc.

Our upper school students are trained as Peer Support Leaders and run activities in small groups for all the primary school students on such themes as 'Making Friends', 'Living Positively' and 'Promoting Harmony'.

Governance

Governance of MRIS is provided by a Governing Body (GB) using a consensus model for decision-making. The GB may have up to 12 members including the following roles:

For two-year terms: Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Parent Body Representative

For annual terms: Deputy Chairperson and committee members to cover nominated portfolios including Communication & Marketing, Grounds & Maintenance, Policies & Procedures.

Names and contact details of [Governing Body Members](#) are listed on the website.

The school's Annual General Meeting is held every year in Term 1 as per the [MRIS Constitution and Rules](#). All parents are encouraged to attend. At this meeting GB elections are held and parents are encouraged to select a support role as part of their commitment to the school according to their interests.

As per the constitution, the school is managed by the Principal who reports to the GB.

Parent Participation

MRIS offers a fantastic opportunity to be involved in your child's formal education journey. The best way to learn about the school is to become involved. Taking a support role is a practical and rewarding way of being involved and learning about the day-to-day running of the school. Support roles are wide-ranging and cover all aspects of schooling. Parents of Kindergarten students or new are encouraged to take on a 'light' support role during their first year, as this is regarded as an orientation year. Support roles and roster duties are also waived for families with newborns or when unforeseen circumstances arise.

Parent participation ranges from assisting in the library or with the newsletter, to classroom help, parent education, fundraising or GB membership. The school relies heavily on this participation to reduce school fees and requires 10hrs of commitment per parent each term. Parents are asked to regularly fill in the Flexible Commitment Hours Book in the office and are invoiced if hours are not completed.

All parents should sign in and out when attending the school (apart from student drop off) so that in the event of an emergency MRIS staff may muster them appropriately.

Volunteer Policy

All parents are required to undergo a Volunteer Induction conducted during class meetings or orientation days by a member of the Governing Body. A Volunteer Induction Checklist and a Confidential Volunteer Declaration will need to be signed and filed confidentially.

Showcasing the School

All parents are required to participate in some way in the school's two major annual events, the [Art Auction](#) and the [Open Day/High Tea](#)

Parent Education

MRIS recognises the importance of the interaction of home and school to create the optimal learning environment for students. All parents are required to attend our STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting) and buy a training book (\$25) as part of their commitment to the school. The Teachers also complete the course. STEP encourages logical consequences rather than reward/punishment. Held at various times through the year, these courses are an invaluable aid, providing parental support, validating parents' existing skills and preparing a parenting plan for the future.

Additionally, the school conducts workshops, using internal expertise or outside consultants, on relevant issues such as the Australian Curriculum, Strategic Planning, The Virtues Programme, learning issues, bullying and protective behaviours.

Class Help & Rosters

Classroom co-ordinators, usually two per class, work with the classroom teacher to co-ordinate fundraising for nominated items e.g. class camps. Fundraising ranges from providing a weekly school lunch for students to a sausage sizzle/cake stall at IGA.

Parents are invited to be on roster in the classrooms. Roster sheets are drawn up at the start of each term to allow parents to nominate preferences. A roster sheet is pinned up in the classroom and a roster duty guide is also on display in the office. Please note as the Kindergarten/Pre Primary requires a regular rostered parent, timetables will be prepared prior to each term and the class teachers will contact you.

There are many other ways parents may assist in the classroom (e.g. covering books). Contact your child's teachers to find out what assistance they need.

Busy Bees

Busy Bees are coordinated by the Governing Body Building Infrastructure Portfolio Holder and are held at the school on the Saturday prior to the start of each term. They are vital for preparing the school for the new term. All parents are required to attend two busy bees each year. The first one for all parents is at the start of the school year and you will be notified of the date for your second one. Please bring everything you are likely to need for the clean-up. A list of tasks is available in the classrooms or from the Busy Bee Coordinator. Busy Bees are a great opportunity for the school community to get together. The Busy Bee Coordinator will make themselves known to you either via the School newsletter or in person.

Parent Body Meetings and Sub committees

Every parent has a voice via Parent Body Meetings held early in Week 4 every term and chaired by the Governing Body's Parent Body Representative. Meetings provide the chance for parents to be heard and involved. The school community values every parent and they are encouraged to participate in meetings. For convenience these meeting are usually held at the bus stops.

Subcommittees are an important way of supporting the governance or management of the School and parents are encouraged to join a sub-committee in their particular interest area.

Parental Feedback

Parental feedback is very important to continue to improve our school. Please do take part in the annual surveys, and if you have any queries or suggestions please contact the Parent Body Rep or Class Coordinator. A recent parent feedback survey on the school's Top 10 Virtues found parents most valued its virtues of **Love-Kindness-Honesty-Respect- Trust-Creativity-Caring-Determination-Courage-Friendliness**

Please Note:

While parents are working in the school grounds out of school time, children in their care must be supervised. Please ensure they do not have access to school rooms or school equipment from the sheds.

Canteen

Canteen is offered to students from the Canteen one day per week, usually Friday at a minimal cost. This is used as a Class Fundraiser for parents for nominated items e.g. camps. Lunch menu is selected by the relevant class and aims to provide healthy choices. Food is prepared in the School's commercial kitchen as per the Canteen Policy.

Communication

Communication in the school is based on a cooperative and participatory philosophy. All members of the school community have the right and responsibility to communicate their feelings and concerns, to be listened to with understanding, or reciprocate by listening openly and with understanding, and to arrange an appropriate time and place to talk.

Responsibility lies with each school member to find an agreement for each situation in a way that is respectful and mutually acceptable to all parties. All adults, including teachers, are called by their first names, to encourage an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Where there are behavioural problems with children, measures in place include one-to-one counselling (including the services of the School's Psychologist) and discussion of the issues at the children's weekly student meeting. Behaviour management is guided by the Virtues Programme, the STEP principles and Restorative Justice Practices. The school has also adopted the No Blame Bullying Approach.

All parents are encouraged to approach their child's teachers first when issues arise with their child, however, should you feel it has not been resolved adequately please contact the Principal to refer complaints. [Complaints & Disputes Procedures Flow Chart](#)

The school also has a Complaints and Disputes Policy and Flow Chart which is available on the school website or by request.

Class Coordinator role

In each year, the teacher will choose one or two Class Coordinators. The Class Coordinator's role is to support the class teacher by communicating with parents and encouraging parents to be involved in the operation of the school.

It is also a vital link between the parents and the Governing Body through the GB Parent Representative. This is a two-way link to provide ideas and feedback from the parents to the teacher and to the GB.

The Class Coordinator welcomes and stays in touch with new parents in conjunction with the Parent Body Representative.

Class Meetings

Early in each term, parents are invited to class meetings at which the teacher discusses the educational aims and plans for each term e.g. camps, and Class Coordinators discuss fundraising and other plans. This is a great opportunity to improve your understanding of your child's learning journey, teacher-parent and parent-parents discussion.

In Term 2, Semester 1, teachers will schedule parent/teacher interviews. Additional parent/teachers meetings are always available at a mutually convenient time. Please contact the relevant teacher directly to make an appointment.

Newsletter

Our weekly newsletter is the vital link between School and home. We encourage you to read it as a family with your child/children. The newsletter is the primary means of communication whole school to home, teacher to parent and parent to parent. It is published every Thursday and contains upcoming events, classroom, Governing Body and Office updates, permission slips and parenting tips. Additionally, the Virtue of the Week is showcased enabling a whole of school and family discussion. If you wish to include something in the newsletter please provide to the Office before midday Tuesday. The newsletter will be sent on Thursday. Where requested a paper copy will be provided in your student's bag. It is also available on our website. Each family receives an electronic newsletter every week on Thursday, to inform them of upcoming events, minutes of meetings, results of activities etc. The newsletter can also be downloaded from the school website www.mris.wa.edu.au

School Rules

MRIS students and staff have developed rules on behaviour at school. A list of these School Rules is available at the office and will be sent home at the beginning of each year. They are also available on the School Manual on the website. These rules are reviewed annually by the students at the whole school weekly meeting. [School Rules](#)

No Hat, No Outside Play –All Year

This rule is to protect your child from over-exposure to harmful UV rays. Parents and teachers are also required to wear broad-brimmed hats when outdoors on the school grounds. The school has been registered as a 'Sun-Smart' school since 2005.

Dress Code

The school uniform is not required daily, however, it is essential for ALL excursions, incursions and interschool sports days so as to provide a 'uniform look', sense of belonging and easy identification of MRIS students. The school uniform consists of the compulsory turquoise school polo shirt, black or turquoise long-sleeved crewneck, black or turquoise school windcheater teamed with either black pants or a black skirt or school uniform dress. All students are expected to dress 'Sun Smart' with coverage on shoulders and midriff. Long hair needs to be tied back and kept neat and tidy as this is the most effective way to avoid lice/nit infestation. Appropriate footwear is required.

Parent providing support are encouraged to support these dress codes by also dressing appropriately i.e. in a 'SunSmart' way.

Safety & Health Guidelines

The school has a comprehensive First Aid Kit. Medications will not be administered to students unless specifically requested by parents in writing.

No Smoking is permitted in the school buildings or on the school grounds.

The school participates in the WA Dental and Health programs and parents are notified of appointments.

MRIS recommends all students be immunised through the WA Health Department vaccination programme. Upon enrolment, parents must present the school with the child's immunisation records "or conscientious objection form" for the school to copy. MRIS adopts the WA Health Department guidelines with respect to all communicable infections and diseases, including enforcement of exclusion periods as recommended by the Department of Health. Children with head lice/ nits are excluded from school until the infestation has been treated.

Any accidents and injuries whether to students, staff, parent volunteers or visitors needs to be reported to the Office as soon as possible and recorded as per MRIS Safety and Health Procedure.

MRIS has an Emergency Policy covering various events including bushfires and emergency response practices are carried out regularly to ensure appropriate preparedness.

Student Absences

- Children need to be signed in if arriving late and signed out if they are removed early from school. Parents must collect a pass from the office to take to the class teacher in order to let the teacher know that the parent has called in to the office.
- If your child is not attending school on a particular day we require parents to contact the school to inform us of the absence. It is School Policy that parents notify the school of any absences.
- It is your legal obligation to ensure your child attends every day the school is open for instruction.
- MRIS discourages parents taking children on holiday outside official school holiday periods. Children experience distinct windows of opportunity in terms of learning and benefit from learning amongst their peers. We encourage you to take advantage of the four end-of-term school holiday periods to enjoy family holidays and extended time together and to ensure your child/children's attendance during term time to maximise their learning opportunities and help them fulfil their potential.
- Unexplained absences can have a negative impact on school funding.

School Bus

There are two school buses operating between Margaret River and MRIS which link to buses from Prevelly, Rosa Brook and other outlying areas, so the school is accessible from anywhere within the shire. There are also buses that can transport children living south of the school.

Bus users must register with the Public Transport Authority at <http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au> and the bus route will be allocated by the PTA with the selected bus contractor. One of MRIS's official bus stops is situated at the Zone Room at Gloucester Park from which the bus departs at 8.40am sharp and returns at 3.10pm. The other stop is east of the Margaret River Primary School at West Park on Hillier Drive from which the bus departs at 8.40am sharp and returns at 3.10pm. Please ensure you are at bus stops 5 minutes in advance of due times. Additional information about school buses (routes, times etc) may be obtained from the office.

Any changes to normal bus procedures for students must be **notified in writing** to the bus driver and class teacher by roll call on the relevant day.

At the school, parents are asked not to enter the car park while the bus is in the area and instead use the designated drop off car parks on the north and south.

Library

MRIS has its own school library from which students, teachers and parents may borrow books. Once a week each class is given a designated time for borrowing. Each child may borrow two books at a time. Students are required to use a school library bag to protect their books and we encourage prompt returns. Lost and damaged books must be paid for.

School Fees

Fees at MRIS are kept to a minimum by the sourcing of grants and parental involvement in the school. School fees are issued annually but may be paid on a term basis. Difficulties in paying fees must be discussed with the Business Manager (via the office) and a payment schedule agreed to at the earliest opportunity. Enrolment cannot be guaranteed for students with outstanding tuition fees from the previous year.

Enrolment Procedures

Application forms and information brochures are available from the school office. Prospective parents are encouraged to make an appointment to see the school and to meet teachers, parents and students. An application for enrolment is effected only once the school has received a completed application form and a non-refundable application fee.

Welcoming Committee

When new families join MRIS the Parent Body Representative will contact them to ensure a smooth start, help the family become part of the school and extend an invitation to the Parent Body meetings.

Further Information

Please refer to our school website www.mris.wa.edu.au or see the more comprehensive School Manual which is available on the website (from March 17), request a hard copy from the office, or speak with your Parent Body Rep or Classroom Coordinator. If you would like a paper copy of any of the documents referred to in the manual please contact the office.



*Welcome and thank you for
Sharing the Learning Journey!!*

“Education is a journey and not a destination, for we must keep developing.....Mrs S.G. Stooke 1937



Academic Excellence

Creativity

Resilience

Respect

Learning Excellence

EST 1982

10890 Bussell Hwy, Forest Grove WA 6286
08 9757 7515 office@mris.wa.edu.au www.mris.wa.edu.au

