

Bayside Leader

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Program smooths path to learning

Sense of connection provides Kilbreda students with a secure platform for their growth, writes **Fifi Lim**

Kilbreda College implemented its mobile phone ban in 2018 and teachers almost immediately noticed a new liveliness in the schoolyard.

"Students were having face-to-face conversations rather than focusing on their phones, which was great to see as it strengthens relationships," principal Nicole Mangelsdorf said.

The ability to connect is key to wellbeing, the assistant principal of wellbeing and engagement, Stephanie Smyth, said.

The Catholic girls secondary school is passionate about nurturing the students so they can achieve their best and has programs in place to support this.

In fact, caring for the students



Kilbreda assistant principal Stephanie Smyth, Rhianna, Annabelle, principal Nicole Mangelsdorf, Yzabel and Gigi.

starts even before they arrive at the college, as demonstrated by its transition program.

Recognising the challenges some students may face moving into Year 7, the college reaches out to primary schools to provide potential students the opportunity to make connections.

A team comprising student wellbeing leaders from Year 7 to 9, the head of learning diversity and Ms Smyth visit the various schools.

"We have students coming from 33 different primary schools from Mount Eliza to Brighton – it's part of the process to introduce ourselves to

potential students and understand their needs," Ms Smyth said.

The college also conducts academic testing to understand their learning needs.

"Moving to secondary school can be overwhelming – students go from having a small, village environment to

one that is triple the size of their primary school and will have six or seven different teachers as opposed to just one," Ms Smyth said.

"If we are aware a child may have a history of anxiety, or may be the only person from their primary school attending Kilbreda, we have plans to ensure they feel safe and supported."

Year 7 students are also provided with peer support from Year 10-11 students and there is a pastoral program to guide them and provide a sense of belonging.

More recently, the college hosted a transit safety clinic where the students, many of whom would be taking public transport independently for the first time, were able to hear expert advice from representatives of Public Transport Victoria and the Victoria Police.

Ms Mangelsdorf said Kilbreda's transition program gave Year 7 students a safe start.

"This start is crucial as it lays the foundation for their learning journey," she said.

Details: kilbreda.vic.edu.au