

About Our School

School context

Blackburn English Language School (Blackburn ELS) delivers full-time, intensive English language programs to newly arrived students in metropolitan and rural areas of the North-Eastern Victoria Region. The school provides primary and secondary English language programs to students from a range of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The school vision is to provide an inclusive, rigorous and engaging learning environment for newly arrived students to develop their English language proficiency and empower them with the knowledge, skills and capabilities to be confident, active participants in the Victorian schooling system and broader community. The school values are Future Making - We strive to learn, grow and to build a positive future, Embracing Diversity - We celebrate and respect difference. Our differences unite and strengthen us, and Building Communities - We work and learn together. We care for and respect each other. The school purpose is to optimise student English language acquisition to best prepare them for the transition to mainstream educational settings. The school operates across three campuses: the Whitehorse Campus in Burwood East, a second campus, Maroondah Campus established in 2009 in Croydon North and a third campus in Wodonga on the grounds of the Wodonga Middle School College-Huon Campus, established in 2018. Students are eligible to enrol for a 6 month or 12-month program based on their visa code within six months of their arrival in Australia. Student numbers fluctuate in accordance with settlement patterns and Australian Government immigration policies. After the pause in migration due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2023-4 were a time of re-establishing campuses in response to new patterns of immigration, with lower numbers of refugee migrants and shifts in settlement patterns due to housing, the cost of living and the availability of community supports for migrants. In 2025 enrolments were stable at all campuses, with 340 students across the school in term 1 and 354 students in Term 4.

Accordingly, staffing also increased from 65.52 equivalent full-time staff in 2025 to 68.01 in 2024: 3 Principal class, 4 Leading Teachers, 2 Learning Specialists 46 teachers and 20 Education Support staff. The total number of employees was 75. In 2025 enrolments continued to increase steadily at all campuses, with 338 students across the school in term 1 and building over the year to 354 students in Term 4.

Progress towards strategic goals, student outcomes and student engagement

Learning

The school achievement goal is to optimise the English language learning of newly arrived students in preparation for mainstream school and participation in the broader community. Student progress against the EAL Victorian F-10 Curriculum of two or more stages in all

language modes (S&L,R&V,W) was the standard measurement of expected progress. In 2025 the school identified that students newly arrived in Australia had highly varied experiences – many experienced extended periods of disruption to their learning in their home countries including long periods of online/remote learning and long periods of isolation. Consequently, teachers identified that students were challenged in a number of ways, including - learning and study habits, organisational skills, building and maintaining relationships with peers, general resilience in the face of the changes they experience and maintaining mental health and interacting positively in the classroom. Our focus for the 2025 school year therefore continued to be on rebuilding, induction and supporting new staff over time, re-establishing collaborative practices and positive learning environments to optimize learning. Learning specialists focused on supporting new staff with effective classroom practices and the new arrivals curriculum. Effective and meaningful PLCs and learning goals to reflect and monitor learning progress were a focus that was well received by staff. Teacher judgement of student achievement data generally showed expected levels of learning gain with some areas warranting attention in 2026, and staff reported favourably on collaboration to improve EAL teaching practice achieve these outcomes. A number of students who showed difficulties with learning and/or engagement were supported and monitored through an IEP or BSP and their next schools were provided with specific observations and evidence to support individual learning needs moving forward. Leadership was placed at Wodonga campus over the year, to support the campus in professional learning with How Language Works and its implementation at the class level. This ensured the continuity of learning for staff. Finally, in Year F-2 an approach towards teaching phonics in context was trialled and a 1-20 week plan for teaching sounds and letters implemented. Professional learning on reading and the new EAL curriculum was well received by teachers and will continue into 2026. Consistency of assessment through moderation will also be a focus in 2026.

Wellbeing

The school Wellbeing goal is to create a safe, supportive and inclusive school environment for all students. In supporting the settlement of newly-arrived families, the school recognizes key transition points for students - on enrolment at Blackburn ELS, movement from class to class during their time at the school and in moving onto mainstream schooling at the end of their program. The school's role to induct students into our program, build their understanding of the school values and behavioural expectations were a strong focus. During 2025 the school focused on embedding its positive behaviours framework with accompanying agreements and routines, with the school values as a central component of classroom expectations. Departments of Education's *Positive Classroom Management Strategies* will continue to guide and embed this work. The school continued to strengthen its *Respectful Relationships* curriculum which aids students in understanding cultural and legal norms in Australian institutions and the broader society; the renewed Health Curriculum to build student understanding and support their transition to mainstream schools; forums with parents to introduce them to the Victorian education system, enunciate our school values and expected behaviours, providing parents with clarity and strategies to support their children's learning in partnership with the school. The school deepened its work in this area in 2025. From Term 1, the school implemented Active Schools and strengthened its physical activity in both daily and weekly activities; a positive behaviours framework and increased resourcing for those with additional needs. In the context of an intensive program, learning, ability and behavioural needs were identified swiftly and support plans were

developed and monitored closely so as to provide support for students both at the school and as they moved to the next setting.

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The wellbeing team was expanded and strengthened in 2025 with a wellbeing coordinator and mental health practitioner at each campus. The team continued with a Wellbeing Check-In survey for year 4 and above, enabling the school to consider student wellbeing data twice each term as well as comparative data across the year. It also trialled the use of Zones of Regulation as a way of highlighting student wellbeing and emotional state at school. The collection of data for lower primary years is still being considered as we embed the Zoned of Regulation in daily practice. The information we gather on student wellbeing, has enabled the wellbeing team to review and realign the work according to needs and continues to highlight the vulnerability of International students who live in a homestay arrangement.

Engagement

Student engagement is critical for positive learning outcomes particularly for students new to Australian schooling and new to English language instruction. Continuous references to the values the school holds and promulgates assists students to be collaborative, collegiate, diligent learners focused on positive outcomes for themselves and their classmates. A positive behaviours framework layered over the values, enables students to acquire behaviours that support their development as learners and as young people, and create a positive learning climate for all students. Student attendance rates very highly in comparison to state averages. Lateness can be an issue as students and their families navigate public and private transport challenges as they adapt to a new city. The school is assiduous in following up on lateness and absenteeism and informing parents of the importance of students arriving at school each day ready for learning. The school emphasis in establishing a safe and supportive learning environment whereby trust and respect are built, enables students to take risks with their learning. This is critical as learners need

to experiment with language and in the acquisition phase will express unconventional grammatical forms, pronunciation variations and idiosyncratic speech and writing amongst other errors. Errors are seen as growth opportunities. Critical aspects for effective engagement lie with accurate and continuous assessment of student need and student growth. This consistent engagement relies on the delivery of learning at point of need, so learners are challenged and extended as required. Aspirational student goal setting and effective teacher feedback also play an important role here in providing clarity to ensure learning is targeted and responsive. Overall, the great majority of students approach their learning of English enthusiastically and see the long-term benefit of maximising this opportunity to build a strong foundation for their future.

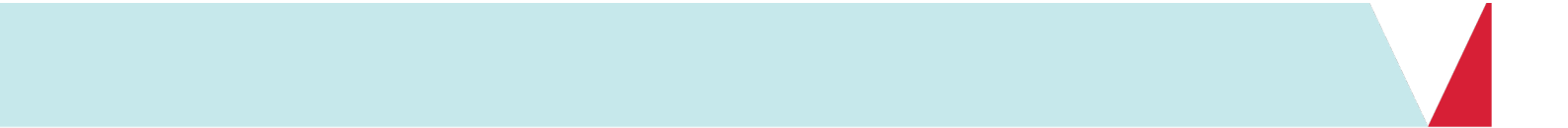
Other highlights from the school year

Enrolments were maintained over the year at all campuses. The school successfully employed new staff and is working to improve their skills in EAL teaching and learning for newly arrived students. The school worked at accommodating changing learning and behaviour needs of cohorts across campuses. Term 1 saw Harmony Day celebrations highlighting our multi-cultural, multilingual school in the context of a diverse Australia. A focus on being physically active has improved students' health and wellbeing. The introduction of art in secondary classes across the school has continued to show the power of creativity and expression in the context of learners who are grappling with identity in a culture and language that is new to them. Our swimming program across each campus provides opportunities for newly arrived learners to gain an understanding of water safety and develop or build upon swimming skills. Excursion programs each term in both sectors included our three-day city program for secondary learners in terms 2 and 4. Parent engagement in Open Classroom and attendance at school information sessions/parenting sessions and parent teacher (learning conferences) meetings were strong and feedback was positive. Staff reviewed learning conferences to involve students and ensure their voice in discussing their learning and this was also received positively.

The renovation of student toilets in the breezeway and conversion of the hall into a library was approved by the VSBA and a tender process commenced to appoint the principle architect. Managed by the VSBA the renovation will get underway in 2026 starting with design and consultation.

Financial performance

The school is in a favourable financial position. Some reserve funds are available to complete future works across campuses. The school posted a surplus at the end of the 2025 school year which is allocated to further improvements across the school. The surplus was due to a number of factors – in 2022 the school's campuses had been funded so as to be prepared to respond to the return of migration across the school year, however the campuses remained closed for the duration of the 2022 school year due to low numbers at Maroondah and Wodonga. Due to changes in student needs, in 2025 equity funding was allocated providing higher levels of support in wellbeing and transition and ongoing pedagogical and curriculum development needs in response to changes to student cohorts and needs due to the impacts of the pandemic. The school has continued to allocate wellbeing staff and increase the number of teacher aides



supporting learning and inclusion in classrooms using equity funding to support students at each campus effectively and equitably.

**For more detailed information regarding our school please visit our website at
<https://www.blackburnels.vic.edu.au/our-school/>**