



Parent and Student Handbook



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Welcome



Welcome to our school community. Darwin Middle School is an independent school educating approximately 750 students across middle years 7 to 9. Our core business model is based on teaching and learning. This model consistently demonstrates success with our academic results being some of the best in the Northern Territory.

We are the STEAM lighthouse school by the sea providing a challenging, vibrant, and innovative learning environment that fosters individual talents and supports students in reaching their highest potential.

Our school wellbeing program and activities are structured to support the needs of our student cohort through the middle years. The program aims to build strong relationships and a sense of belonging ensuring students are engaged and equipped to achieve success.

We are well positioned as the middle school closest to the central business district and take enrolments from our feeder Primary Schools at Larrakeyah, Parap, Stuart Park, and Ludmilla. Our year 9 students progress onto Darwin High School to continue their secondary schooling from years 10 to 12.

I look forward to meeting our new students and families and hope that you enjoy your time at Darwin Middle School.

Warm regards

Marcus Dixon

Principal



Independent public school, mission, vision & values

Darwin Middle School is an independent public school. Independent public schools are not private schools, they operate under the Department of Education while being accountable to a school board.

Independent public schools are responsible for their own educational programs, financial decisions, staffing, curriculum content and ongoing development within the bounds of legislation, government policy and their constitution.

Being an independent public school provides the autonomy to respond flexibly and innovatively to the local community and students' needs which achieves better outcomes.



Mission

- We provide a challenging, innovative and vibrant learning environment that fosters individual talents and supports students reaching their highest potential.

Vision

- Darwin Middle School is a positive learning centre leading the way in middle years education through innovation and contemporary educational practices, ensuring students' learning and social needs are being developed for their future pathways.

Values

- Trust, Respect, Focus and Teamwork

Enrolment procedure

Darwin Middle School operates at capacity with approximately 750 families choosing to be part of our school community.

Our priority enrolment area represents the catchment of students who reside within proximity to the school. These students will have priority placement over those who reside outside the catchment area. Parents/carers who wish to enrol a child in the school must demonstrate that the student's primary place of residence is within the priority enrolment area.

All enrolment applications for students who reside outside the priority enrolment area will be assessed using the following criteria:

- Year 7 enrolments- student who have completed year 6 at a primary school within our priority enrolment area but reside outside of the catchment area.
- Year 7 enrolments - a younger sibling of a currently enrolled student who will continue for the school year, attending Darwin Middle School.
- Year 7 enrolments - students who reside outside of the priority enrolment area may audition for the year 7 Concert Band on selected instruments, as directed by the Assistant Principal Performing Arts.
- Places will be considered for the year 7 Student of High Performance Program if school capacity allows.

Families are to note that this criteria is a guide only and not a guarantee of enrolment.



Darwin Middle School – Catchment Area for Enrolment

You can complete a student enrolment form either online or in person at the Darwin Middle School Office.

- [student enrolment form PDF \(308.5 KB\)](#)
- [student enrolment form DOCX \(156.8 KB\)](#)

As part of the enrolment process you will be asked to familiarise with the schools [Behaviour Management Plan](#) and enter into the following agreements:

- Student media consent
- ICT Agreement

When enrolling you will need to provide a 100 point proof of identification along with the following:

- Students birth certificate or equivalent identification
- Proof of current address
- Details of any medical conditions
- Emergency contact details
- Immunisation record
- Name of previous school (if appropriate).

Your child's records will automatically transfer when a student moves between government schools in the Territory. If your child is transferring from a non-government school, or from an interstate school, you will need to request that your child's records be provided.

Upon receiving your completed enrolment request, your child's acceptance will be subject to an assessment undertaken in line with the Darwin Middle School enrolment policy.



School supplies



School supplies are available for purchase through the Administration Office between the hours of 7:45am and 3:00pm.

Items include essential school supplies and school uniforms. EFTPOS and card facilities are available.

School uniforms

At Darwin Middle School we care about our students' safety, and their image within the community. We believe that their appearance is a significant visible communicator about our school and themselves.

All students at Darwin Middle School are required to wear a school uniform whilst attending school and when participating in excursions.

Our uniform is a universal design that meets the requirements of an active school life and the tropical climate that we live in.

Boys school uniform

- Unisex school T shirt or polo shirt
- School shorts (with Darwin Middle School logo)
- Enclosed footwear

Girls school uniform

- Unisex or girls school T shirt or polo shirt
- School shorts (with Darwin Middle School logo)
- Enclosed footwear



School T-shirts and shorts are available for purchase from the Administration Office.

School terms

School term dates for 2023

Semester	Term	Start	Finish
1	1	Tuesday 31 January	Thursday 6 April
	2	Monday 17 April	Friday 23 June
2	3	Tuesday 18 July	Friday 22 September
	4	Monday 9 October	Friday 15 December

Timetables

The school day commences with the first bell at 8:00am and finishes at 2:25pm.

Students who arrive late, after 8:10am are to present at the Office of Good Standing.

Bell Times	Start	Finish	Duration
Lesson 1*	8:00am	9:05am	65 minutes
Lesson 2	9:05am	10:10am	65 minutes
Recess	10:10am	10:35am	25 minutes
Lesson 3*	10:35am	11:40am	65 minutes
Lesson 4	11:40am	12:45pm	65 minutes
Lunch	12:45pm	1:25pm	40 minutes
Lesson 5*	1:25pm	2:25pm	60 minutes

(* 5-minute pre-bell will sound)

All students arriving after 8:00am will be marked as late.

Office of Good Standing

The Office of Good Standing plays a pivotal role at Darwin Middle School, encouraging positive behaviour. The Office of Good Standing provides:

- oversight of the Reflection Room.
- an Attendance Officer, who:
 - coordinates the office of good standing,
 - records absences and late arrivals
 - administers the signing in/out processes
 - coordinates good standing awards and issuing blue slips/green slips (incorrect uniforms)

Behaviour management

At Darwin Middle School everyone has the right to be treated with courtesy and dignity and to learn in a safe and supportive environment. It is expected that all students at Darwin Middle School will:

- Undertake their study in a conducive young adult learning environment
- Follow teacher's instructions
- Commit to improving their academic result
- Attend school and all classes as per the school time schedule
- Participate in supporting the school community
- Represent the school in sporting and academic teams
- Feel safe, free from harassment and discrimination
- Be respected by others
- Enjoy learning and to pursue high standards
- Learn in an atmosphere of order and cooperation.
- Behave in a manner that is representative of the school values and do not bring the school into disrepute.



Good Standing Awards Program

The purpose of the Good Standing Awards Program is to build a culture of positivity and caring; for each other, school property and the general school community.

It provides an opportunity to recognise, celebrate and reward endeavour, good behaviour and achievement. The program recognises exemplary achievement by students across three categories:

1. **Academic** - Awarded to students who consistently demonstrate a high level of achievement in four out of six learning areas.
2. **Endeavour** - Awarded to students who consistently demonstrate improvement in individual subject areas as well as consistently behaving in class.
3. **Community** - Awarded to students who have performed significant service to the school and the wider community.

Good standing awards are issued by teachers to students (via blue tokens) for exhibiting behaviour that reflects the school [Core Values](#):

- Four blue slips (10 house points) from any category = Bronze
- Eight blue slips (30 house points) from any category = Silver
- 12 blue slips (60 house points) = Gold
- 16 blue slips (100 house points) = Platinum
- Platinum Award achieved in years 7, 8 & 9 = Diamond



Wellbeing, inclusion, and diversity

The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework provides the hierarchy for the Darwin Middle Schools' approach to student wellbeing. It includes five elements that provide the foundation for the whole school community to promote student wellbeing, safety and learning outcomes:

1. **Leadership** – Viable leadership to improve positive school communities
2. **Inclusion** – Inclusive and connected school culture
3. **Student Voice** – Authentic student participation
4. **Partnerships** - Effective family and community participation
5. **Support** – Wellbeing and support for positive behaviour



Darwin Middle School makes significant investment into the Wellbeing Program each year to support the social and emotional learning of our students. The Wellbeing Program is a variety of support initiatives and activities developed to meet the needs of our student cohort. Our focus is to develop skills such as resilience, dealing with bullying, managing the online cyber world and positive mental health. The Wellbeing Program is available to all students throughout the year.

For more information contact the Assistant Principal, Operational and Wellbeing.

Acceptable use of technology

Darwin Middle School provides a computer network which includes internet access facilities, computers and other school ICT equipment/devices to support teaching and learning programs. The school ICT equipment/devices are for educational purposes appropriate our school environment.

All students attending Darwin Middle School access the school ICT equipment to facilitate their learning, even if they provide their own devices. As such all enrolled students and their parents/carers will need to agree to the terms and conditions within the Darwin Middle School Cybersafe Agreement prior to their enrolment being accepted.

Printing usage for students

Darwin Middle School has a Printing Usage for Students Policy to encourage smart printing which limits waste and the impact on the environment. Access to the school printing facilities is on a user pays arrangement:

- All students automatically receive \$5.00 printing credit upon enrolment (approx. 50 pages)
- Additional recharge vouchers can be purchased at any time via the Administration Office
- Students are able to view their balance and transaction history when logged into any machine at the school.

Printing costs: 10c per page with 2c discount for each second page if using duplex printing.

Mobile phones and personal devices

Student mobile phones are not permitted to be used at Darwin Middle School and are to be off and away during the school day.

Smart watches must be placed on flight mode so phone calls and messages cannot be sent or received during the school day.

The school accepts that parents/carers may give their children mobile phones to protect them from everyday risks involving personal security and safety. It is acknowledged that providing a child with a mobile phone provides reassurance of direct contact. In cases of emergency contact the school office who will ensure your child is reached quickly.

Students who bring personal devices to school do so at their own or parent's risk. Darwin Middle School does not take any responsibility for accidental property damage or theft of personal items. Students and their parents/carers are encouraged to obtain appropriate insurance for their personal items.

Additional academic or learning needs

At Darwin Middle School we recognise that some students have learning needs in various areas that may require extra assistance. This can be facilitated by Wellbeing, Inclusion Support Team (WIST) at the Wellbeing Centre. This may include:

- in-class support, small group withdrawal or one-on-one assistance, for a variety of reasons: extension, intervention etc.
- identification of a flexible pathway that is tailored to the student

Discussions between parents/carers and teachers are strongly encouraged in these instances to support the need of the student.

English as a second language

Darwin Middle School has resources to cater for students from non-English backgrounds through the Wellbeing, Inclusion and Support Team who provide support on an as needs basis across all three-year levels.

Students are assessed on their understanding of '[Standard Australian English](#)' (SAE). If a student does not present with SAE, they will be referred to the Sanderson Middle School Intensive English Unit.

Excursions

Excursions relevant to the curriculum are arranged throughout the school year. Parents/carers are expected to pay if there is additional cost.

Details of excursions are provided 4 weeks prior. Students must obtain parental permission and payment to attend. Students must wear school uniforms which may incur an additional cost.

School camps, interstate/overseas trips

School camps and school travel are intended to; build confidence, ignite creativity, problem-solving, stimulate a sense of adventure and encourage social interaction. Attending these events are a privilege, students must be of good standing to attend.

Details of events are generally provided at the commencement of the year. Parental permission is required to attend and there are additional costs relating to travel, activities and school uniforms.



School curriculum

The Australian curriculum forms the basis of teaching and learning in the middle years, with a strong focus on the social, emotional, physical and academic development of children.

The Australian curriculum recognises that your child develops at different rates to others, has different learning needs, areas of interest and aspirations. The curriculum is used flexibly in schools to meet the educational needs of all students.

Your child is assessed both formally and informally using the following:

Assessment is used for the following:

- understanding your child's strengths and weaknesses
- informing the next stages of teaching and learning
- helping teachers monitor your child's progress
- informing your child's report.

Assessment includes the following:

- frequent classroom assessments
- reading, writing and numeracy in years 7 and 9 under the [National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy \(NAPLAN\) Assessment and Reporting](#)
- Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) for Reading and Mathematics in Terms 1 and 4. Read more on the [Australian Council for Educational Research website](#).

Your child may also be assessed in science, literacy, civics and citizenship and information and communication technology literacy under the National Assessment Program sample assessments. For more information, go to the [National Assessment Program website](#).

All students must complete four core subjects, which are English, Mathematics, Science and Humanities and Social Sciences. In addition to the core subjects, all year 7 and 8 students will study a language, health, and physical education. Over the year students will complete four subjects from the Design, Arts and Technologies Faculty. Students are assigned these subjects from across the faculty to allow them to sample a different range of learning experiences. In year 9 students can choose their elective subjects for the year. However, they must complete a compulsory Health and Physical Education subject for one semester.



Teaching and Learning Model

We have a common [Teaching and Learning Model](#) which contributes to better planning, consistent language and clear expectations across the whole school.

This ensures that units of work and lessons achieve their purpose, which is effective student learning.



School programs

VETiS

Students at Darwin Middle School can participate in VETiS programs during year 9. Students can participate whilst continuing with the normal school curriculum.

A 12-month program of 1 day a week at the Middle Years Trade Centre where students may undertake MSM10216 Certificate I in Manufacturing (Pathways). This course is designed to develop skills essential for employment and skills that relate directly to a work activity as specified in the selected industry/technical unit.

STEAM

Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) are recognised as the most powerful 21st Century skill sets for a leading educational experience, ensuring that our students are well positioned to embrace future opportunities intrinsically intertwined with their contemporary identity and life journey.

STEAM engage students and equip them with critical thinking, problem solving, creative and collaborative skills, establishing connections between the school, work, community and the global economy.

As the leading CBD middle school in the Northern Territory we cater to highly articulate people who have passions and skills as artists, instrumentalists and desires to participate in thespian activities. We are the leading, STEAM provider within the Northern Territory context with extensive science laboratories, robotics, science and engineering, arts and mathematics programs and services being integral to the school's operations.



Concert, band, and music

We provide the largest and most comprehensive middle school music program in the Northern Territory with specialist teachers and state of the art music teaching facilities including a concert band rehearsal room, four instrumental studio rehearsal rooms, a percussion rehearsal room, a music technology lab, and a recording studio.

These outstanding facilities provide an environment for students to expand their musical capabilities and performance skills whilst fostering their creativity in spaces that develop their individual talents.

The classroom music program caters to the full range of abilities from the novice player to the most accomplished performer. Students develop their critical and creative thinking skills, build their musical potential, and develop their confidence by playing their instrument solo and/or in groups at public performances.

Each year, elective music students participate in a semester of concert band, this integrated performance approach dramatically improves their confidence and playing abilities.



Student Representative Council & Student Parliament

Our Student Representative Council (SRC) is a student-based group designed to foster school spirit and leadership among students. The members of the SRC change each year to maintain a fresh approach and a strong student voice within the school. Members are leaders who help to create and nurture constructive ideas within the school community. They are approachable students who are representatives of our student body.

The SRC represents students from all three-year levels. Further information about the SRC can be accessed [here](#).



In 2023 our Student Parliament will be established. The Student Parliament will be an overarching student body that will meet four times a year. Their role is to identify improvement opportunities, inform policy and contribute to the overall learning, environment.

To facilitate the best outcomes for students, it is vital that there is an effective relationship between the school and parents/carers. It is expected that parents/carers will be an active participant in students' academic achievement and wellbeing while they are attending Darwin Middle School. This includes active participation in, parent/teacher interviews and any wellbeing management and/or behaviour management strategies that may need to be facilitated.

Parent contact

We encourage active communication between the school and families. On enrolment you will be asked to provide your preferred email address to allow the school to communicate directly to you.

As a parent/carer you can contact the school at any time. A staff school [contact list](#) is available to assist you in finding the correct email address for the right person across all departments of the school.

The *Communication Guide* on page 20 provides information on who to contact and our communication process for student wellbeing and curriculum matters.

Absenteeism/lateness

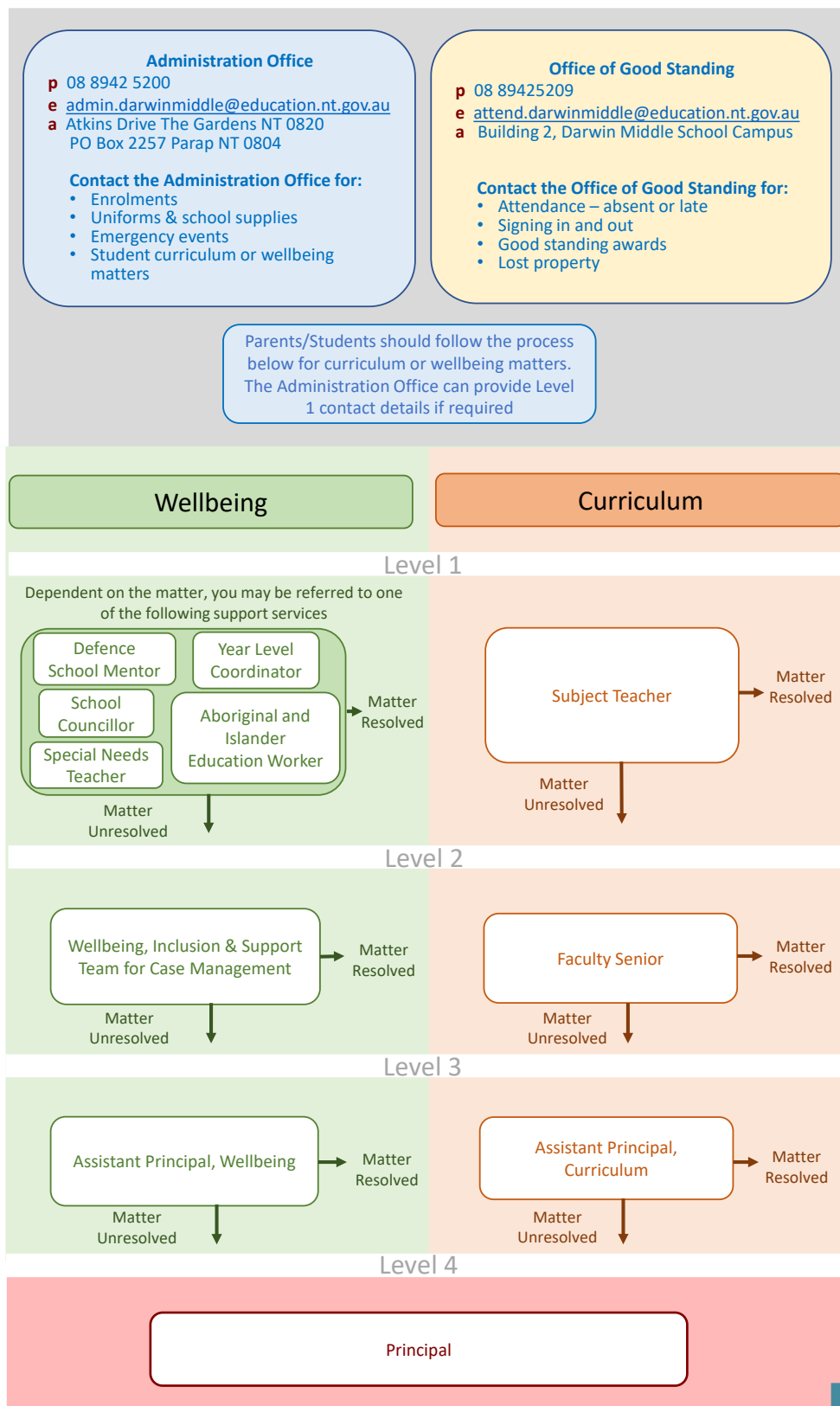
Parents/carers are to contact the Office of Good Standing if your child is absent, late, or leaving early. Contact can be made via email: attend.darwinmiddle@education.nt.gov.au.

A note may also accompany the student upon their return to school. However, please note that while this is an acceptable method, if the student is going to be absent for an extended period, please provide prior notice. Students who are absent for more than 3 days may be requested to provide a medical certificate.

All students who arrive after 8:10am will be marked as late. Students arriving after 8:10am must go to the Office of Good Standing and sign in via the school attendance register.

Early departure from school will not be granted unless the school has received authorisation from a parent/carer. An Exit Note is completed for the student recording the date and time of departure. Students can collect an Exit Note from the Office of Good Standing at recess or lunch and can use them to be released from class at the appropriate time. All students leaving during the school day are to sign out via the attendance register in the Office of Good Standing prior to leaving the school grounds.

Communication Guide



COMPASS

COMPASS is a web-based system that provides an online platform for students, parents and the school to communicate.

An app called *COMPASS School Manager* is also available for both iPhones/iPads (via the App Store) and Android phones/tablets (via the Google Play Store).

The browser version of the Parent Portal contains more features than the app. Students and their families are encouraged to download the COMPASS app to their smart phone/tablet device.

To [access COMPASS](#) parents/carers and students will be issued with an individual login name and password upon enrolment.

There will be a requirement to update passwords and confirm an email address and mobile phone number. These details will be used by the school for SMS and email communication throughout the year.

Once logged into COMPASS students and parents/carers can:

- view student timetable and school calendar
- view up-to-date attendance information
- enter details of upcoming absences or explain past absences or late arrivals
- make bookings for parent teacher interviews
- view a newsfeed of school announcements, alerts, and updates
- communicate by email with teachers

Non submission of assessment tasks

Parents/carers can monitor assessment tasks via COMPASS. This is a good way to monitor and support your child's achievement while they are at Darwin Middle School.

If a student fails to submit an assignment by the due date a non-submission letter is emailed home. A period of one week from the date of the letter will be provided for the assessment to be completed and submitted. If an email address cannot be provided, parents/carers will be contacted by phone. A formal letter will then be sent out to the address provided.

Weekly parent newsletter

At Darwin Middle School we like to communicate via an electronic newsletter which is sent out at the end of each week. The purpose of these newsletters is to keep parents/carers informed of what has occurred over the week and to advise of scheduled upcoming events.

Parent teacher interviews



Parent teacher interviews are held in term 1 and term 3. Darwin Middle School uses COMPASS to book interview times that are best for you. To access COMPASS your email is used to provide you with your PIN and login two weeks prior to interviews.

Parents/carers are welcome to contact their child's teachers at any time, a contact list can be found on our website.

Website

At Darwin Middle School we are moving towards our information becoming electronically accessible. [Our website](#) provides information about our school, our curriculum and the delivery of specific programs that support students through the middle years. Our website is updated regularly for continual improvement. We invite all families to utilise our website and provide us with feedback on their user experience.

Homework

At Darwin Middle School we recognise that homework is an integral part of the learning process and equips students with lifelong skills, such as organisation, time management, problem solving, goal setting and perseverance. Homework is intended to help students reflect upon and consolidate what has been learnt in class, practise new skills, and prepare for upcoming lessons and assessment tasks.

In the middle years, homework should be approximately:

- 3 hours per week in year 7
- 4 hours per week in year 8
- 5 hours per week in year 9

While some of these hours will include compulsory homework set by classroom teachers, students are also expected to engage in independent learning to complement work undertaken in class.

It is an expectation that students complete all the set homework and assignment tasks to the best of their ability and in a timely manner. However, we understand that there may be circumstances that impact a student's ability to complete work. Where this is the case, we ask that students communicate with their teacher as soon as possible to seek assistance or discuss whether extra time is required to complete the work. Parents/carers are expected to encourage their child's independent learning and assist in establishing a homework routine that suites the family dynamic. Parents/carers are to communicate with the class teacher if there are any difficulties in completing set homework tasks. This can be via a phone, email, or COMPASS.



Driftwood Café

Located in Building 5 the Driftwood Café is open for recess and lunch.

The Driftwood Café provides students with healthy cold and hot food meal options.

Cash and or EFTPOS (card) are accepted.



Water intake



The extreme heat of the tropics can easily lead to dehydration in children and adults.

It is strongly recommended that everyone consume two to four litres of water daily.

Cold-water bubblers are situated in several locations around the school and children are encouraged to use water bottles.

Medication

At times, it is necessary for medication to be taken during school hours. When this occurs, please notify the school so that we are aware that your child has permission to possess and administer the medication. Parents/Carers are to notify the school if their child is on regular medication.

Sickness & injury

Students who are sick should not attend school. They may pose a risk to the health of others and may increase the severity and length of their own illness.

If a student is too ill to be at school or a serious injury occurs, parents/carers are contacted. It may be considered necessary to have the child taken immediately to the hospital or the local practitioner for medical attention. In such cases the school will not be responsible for any costs incurred other than the ambulance for which the school has ambulance cover.

Please ensure your current emergency contact number is on all school records. A staff member with a current First Aid Certificate carries out the administration of first aid and is available to assist in an emergency.



Infections and communicable diseases

If your child has an infectious disease or a contagious condition, he/she should be kept away from school until recovered.

It is requested that parents/carers notify the school as soon as an infectious disease is diagnosed.

The table below outlines exclusion times from school for a variety of common illnesses.

For a more comprehensive list of infectious diseases please refer to the [Department of Health](#).

Condition	Period of Exclusion
Diarrhoea	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowl motion for 24 hours
Chicken Pox	Exclude until all blisters have dried. This usually is at least 5 days after the rash first appears in non-immunised children and less in immunised children
Conjunctivitis	Exclude until discharge from the eyes has stopped unless a doctor has diagnosed non-infections conjunctivitis
German Measles/Rubella	Exclude until fully recovered or for at least 4 days after the onset of the rash.
Glandular Fever	Exclusion not necessary
Impetigo (school sores)	Exclude until appropriate antibiotic treatment has started. Any sores on exposed skin should be covered with a watertight dressing.
Measles	Exclude for 4 days after the onset of the rash.
Ringworm Scabies Pediculosis (Lice)	Exclude until the appropriate treatment has commenced.

School assemblies

Whole school assemblies are held twice per term. These assemblies showcase musical talent and celebrate student achievement.

Regular year level assemblies are also held four times per term to discuss year level specific issues.



Transport

Car parking and pick up points

A drop off facility is available at the front of the school along with visitor parking. Please exercise caution when dropping off and collecting students from either within the school grounds or in nearby streets.

Do not park and leave your car if you are in the drop-off zone.

Bicycles

Students who ride bicycles to school may utilise the designated secure area located at the rear of the campus.

Students are asked not to ride in the school grounds. The use of locks on bikes is recommended. The wearing of helmets is a legal requirement in the Northern Territory.

School bus

School busses are available for students to travel to and from school. Bus travel is free while students are in school uniform. Bus timetables and routes are available on the Northern Territory Governments Public Transport [website](#).



Emergency procedures

Fire and other emergencies

There is a predetermined evacuation procedure for fire or other emergencies as per the map below. A continuous ringing of the fire bell signals this. Regular fire drills are conducted.

A copy of the school's Emergency Management Plan is available on request.

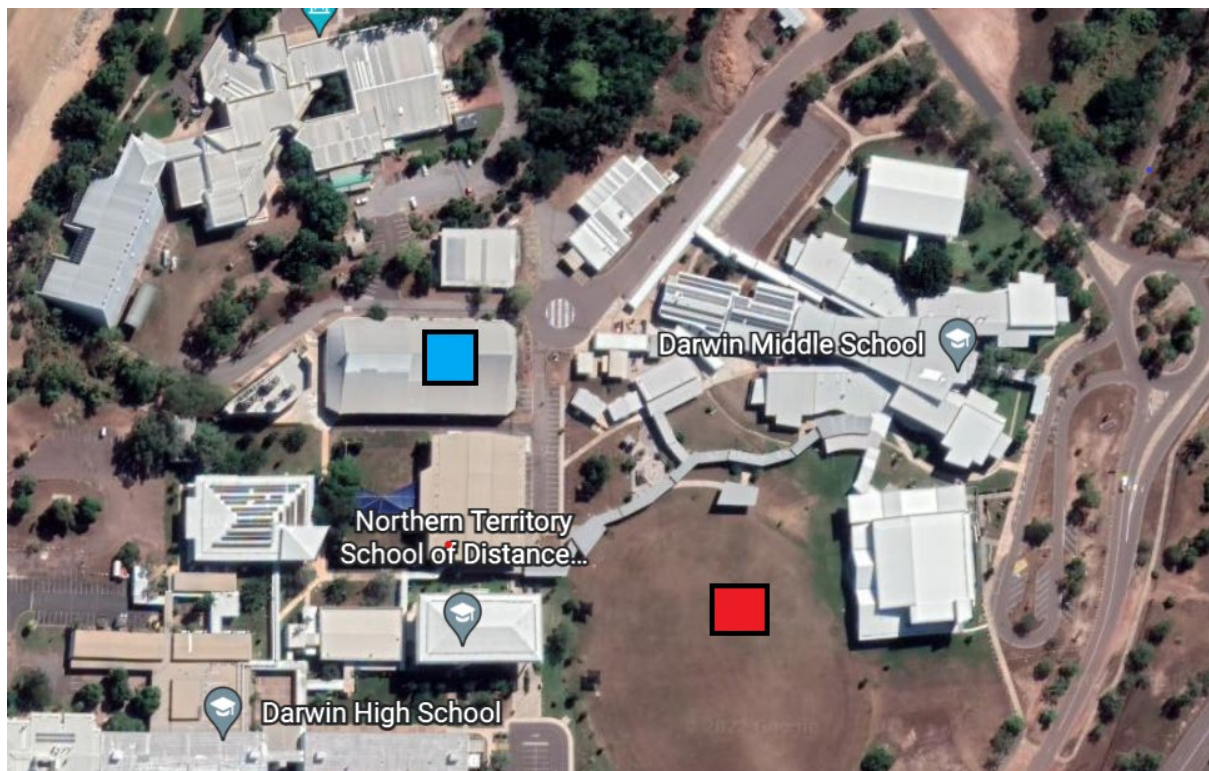
When the school is unattended, any emergency situations should be reported to the Police: 131 444.



DMS Evacuation Assembly Point



Secondary DMS Evacuation Assembly Point – Wet Option



Cyclone

The school will monitor all weather advice once a Cyclone Watch has been issued.

Once a Cyclone Warning has been issued the Territory Emergency Management Council (TEMC) may issue advice to close all schools. Upon receipt of notification the Administration Team will notify parents/carers via the DMS Website, media, SMS messaging service, email or phone.

Teaching staff will:

- prepare students to move into roll groups to designated waiting area
- collect sign out sheets for roll groups
- move students to designated waiting area
- assist with supervision in the designated waiting area
- lock classroom
- ensure students are dismissed into the care of a responsible adult or a person nominated by the parent/carer – students to sign out with time recorded and who collected
- ensure students going home independently have confirmation (verbal or written) from parents/carers to do so and will sign out of the school with the confirmation noted by relevant staff member and time of exit.

Visitors

All visitors to Darwin Middle School (parents/carers, tradesmen, other Education Department personnel etc) are required to sign the Visitors and Contractors Sign-in/Out Register. This register is located at the Administration Office. Visitors must sign in before visiting any part of the school. On departure, they must sign out.

Visitor parking is located at the front of the school.

Lost property

A lost property container is kept in the Office of Good Standing and may be checked at any time. Property remaining unclaimed at the end of each semester is donated to charity. Valuable items (jewellery etc.) should not be worn to school.