



MELBOURNE
GIRLS GRAMMAR

MGGS

Outdoor

Education

Parents' Handbook
2025

Melbourne Girls Grammar
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WELCOME TO OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Outdoor education is a powerful learning experience, something that participants will remember for the rest of their lives. At MGGS, we want to incorporate that sort of learning into the everyday life of the school. With regular contact with the outdoors, we will build, amongst our students, a love of nature, competence in outdoor skills, comfort in the outdoors, and confidence in their own capabilities.

VISION

To build the preeminent Outdoor Education Program in Australia and through it, to inspire with awe.

MISSION

In the pursuit of our vision, we are committed to:

- ▶ Building Students who have the skills, the confidence, and the desire to travel independently in the outdoors.
- ▶ Fostering ethical women of action.
- ▶ Providing a safe and encouraging environment for our students to test themselves.
- ▶ Helping young women to be of, and an active participant in, the world.
- ▶ Encouraging a playful attitude.

VALUES

- ▶ Integrity
- ▶ Compassion
- ▶ Courage
- ▶ Self-discipline



This booklet is intended as a guide for parents/guardians, students, and supporters of Outdoor Education at MGGS. More detailed information can be found on the [eVI page](#) and, as each compulsory camp or expedition approaches, specific year-level pages will be updated.

If you have any further questions, contact Rob Houghton Head of Outdoor Education, at outdoor.education@mggs.vic.edu.au.

THE PROGRAM

“When we’re uncomfortable, we’re paying attention.”

Gina Chick, Alone Australia Winner

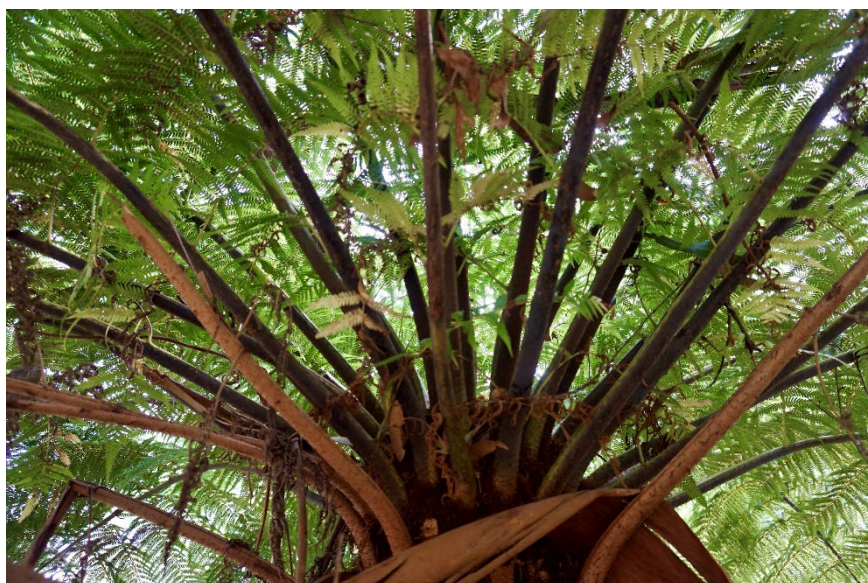
MGGS has an ambitious goal with its Outdoor Education program, unmatched by virtually any other school in Victoria: to provide at least one outdoor experience for every student, every year.

Over the course of their career at MGGS, a Grammarian will learn vital skills, competence, and confidence in the outdoor environment, at the same time developing a love of the natural world and a deep understanding of Victoria’s varied landscape.

We use a framework, here at MGGS, to inform the planning and teaching of Outdoor Education. This framework is the basis of the OE curriculum, and it is what each student will return to year-on-year as they build their experience. The framework is represented by the acronym SAGES.

SAGES

Skills	Adventure	Growth	Environment	Service
The skills necessary to be comfortable in the outdoors.	...and exploration. Uncertain outcomes, learning to fail, risk literacy.	Personal development. Leadership & inter-dependence. Wellbeing.	A love for the natural world. An understanding of Indigenous Knowledge.	Giving back where our help is useful and wanted.



PROGRESSION

Our ultimate goal is to create a generation of students who are competent and confident enough to undertake their own adventurous journeys. To do that we need to build their confidence incrementally, starting at Morris Hall, and applying layer upon layer of expertise as the students progress so that, to them, they barely notice their development at all.

At MGGS, we have three streams that our Grammarians will progress through, each building on the learning of before.

Hatching	Fledging	Spreading Wings
P-4	5-8	9-12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to be comfortable in the outdoors. • Adventure play. • Learning the fundamentals of outdoor activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing outdoor-specific skills. • Gaining skills in outdoor living. • Beginning to spend nights in tents. • Taking first steps towards journeys and expeditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a growing independence. • Learning to manage oneself and others in wild environments. • Beginning to create own Adventures.

COMPULSORY vs. OPT-IN

As a part of our project to provide an outdoor experience for every student, every year, we have compulsory Outdoor Education days, camps, or expeditions, at every year level except for Years 9, 11, and 12. These trips and adventure days are considered an integral part of every Grammarian's learning, and attendance is expected for everyone. **Non-attendance will be considered in the same way as an academic absence.**

In addition to the extensive program of compulsory Outdoor Education (see the next section), we also offer opt-in expeditions and other opportunities. Every two years, there is a long, overseas expedition for Years 10 and 11 and last year was the latest one. During the off years (2025 included), we instead offer a selection of shorter, but no less intense, inter-state adventures. As well as this, we have other opportunities including the Adventure Program, Duke of Edinburgh, and will in the future, be bringing in expeditions for Middle Years.



2025 OUTDOOR EDUCATION CALENDAR

These are the confirmed compulsory and opt-in days, camps, and expeditions for 2025. There may be other opportunities added as and when they become available. Outdoor Education will send out notifications for any of these opportunities so keep an eye on eVI and emails, and to keep up to date, please visit the [eVI page](#).

February	
4 th – 7 th	Year 7 Camp – Kinglake Forest Adventures, Kinglake
Dates tbc	Year 6 camp preparation day - MGGS
Tuesdays	Adventure Pathways – Sailing, Albert Park
Mondays	Adventure Pathways – Climbing, Hardrock CBD
March	
11 th – 14 th	Year 6 Camp – Nillahcootie Camp, Nillahcootie
Tuesdays	Adventure Pathways – Sailing, Albert Park
Mondays	Adventure Pathways – Climbing, Hardrock CBD
April	
5 th – 8 th	Opt-in Expedition - Duke of Edinburgh Bronze, Great Ocean Walk
28 th – 30 th	Year 4 Camp – Angahook, Aireys Inlet
28 th – 2 nd May	Year 10 Expedition of Choice – various locations around Victoria
1 st	Adventure Pathways – Sailing, Albert Park
May	
5 th – 9 th	Year 8 Expedition – Tandara Camp, Halls Gap
Tuesdays	Adventure Pathways – Bushcraft, tbc
Mondays	Adventure Pathways – Climbing, Hardrock CBD
June	
28 th – 10 th July	Opt-in SY Expedition – Red Centre Overland
Tuesdays	Adventure Pathways – Bushcraft, tbc
Mondays	Adventure Pathways – Climbing, Hardrock CBD
July	
Tuesdays	Adventure Pathways – Canoe/kayak, Yarra River & school pool
Mondays	Adventure Pathways – Climbing, Hardrock CBD
August	
Tuesdays	Adventure Pathways – Canoe/kayak, Yarra River & school pool
Mondays	Adventure Pathways – Climbing, Hardrock CBD
September	
20 th – 25 th	Opt-in SY Expedition – The Three Capes Track, Tasmania
Tuesdays	Adventure Pathways – Canoe/kayak, Yarra River & school pool
Mondays	Adventure Pathways – Climbing, Hardrock CBD
October	
28 th – 31 st	Year 5 Camp – Lord Somers Camp, Somers
29 th – 31 st	Year 3 Camp – Stringybark, Gembrook
Dates tbc	Year 1&2 Adventure Days
Dates tbc	Year 3&4 Adventure Days

Dates tbc	Prep Adventure Day
Tuesdays	Adventure Pathways – Mountain Biking, various locations
Mondays	Adventure Pathways – Climbing, Hardrock CBD
November	
Tuesdays	Adventure Pathways – Mountain Biking, various locations
Mondays	Adventure Pathways – Climbing, Hardrock CBD
December	
7 th – 15 th	Opt-in SY Expedition – One and All tall ship, Port Adelaide
Tuesdays	Adventure Pathways – Mountain Biking, various locations
Mondays	Adventure Pathways – Climbing, Hardrock CBD



GENERAL INFORMATION

COMPULSORY, YEAR-LEVEL CAMP & EXPEDITION PROCESS

Below is a diagram that lays out the timeline of events leading up to and just after a compulsory camp or expedition. The compulsory trips all happen at a year level and, in general, all students in that year level will attend at once.



Please note the following points about this process:

- ▶ The Year-level team will put a great deal of work into collating the activity groups, cabin lists, and tent allocations. They take into consideration, friendship groups, learning goals, and a host of other criteria. It's a difficult job and takes a long time, your understanding of the difficulties inherent in this task are appreciated.
- ▶ Parents and guardians must explain any intended absences from the program as this would be considered in the same way as an absence from any other school day.

- ▶ When the Consent2Go request is sent, a prompt response from parents and guardians is really appreciated as any delay in providing consent, delays the rest of the camp organisation process and can, ultimately, result in the student not being able to attend.
- ▶ With the Consent2Go request there will be attached a form giving permission for medication administration, this form must be signed and returned to give permission to the MGGS staff to give your child medication.
- ▶ Also with the Consent2Go request, there will be a kit list attached as well as on the eVI page. This kit list has been carefully selected to reflect the equipment that each student will need on this specific camp or expedition. Please see the section on equipment on page 11.

DIETARIES AND MEDICALS

It is rare nowadays that an Outdoor Education provider cannot cope with any particular dietaries. We will do everything we can to liaise with our providers to ensure that your Grammarian has access to plenty of food and that all dietary needs are taken into account. This works best, of course, when we have the most up to date information on any student's particular requirements. Please ensure that you keep the school apprised of any changes in your child's needs.

This is also true for medical issues. We can provide assistance and support for almost any kind of medical issue while away on camp or expedition. Where activities, or elements of activities, become impossible, we will provide alternative arrangements and challenges. However, again we need the most up to date information in order to achieve that.

NO NEWS IS GOOD NEWS

Many of our camps and expeditions go to remote parts of Victoria, Australia, and the rest of the world. It is not always possible to maintain good, digital communications with the outside world. We don't guarantee, therefore, that there will be regular updates from camp. Where and when we can, we will send photos back to the school for them to share, but in all other respects, please consider no news as good news: **if you don't hear from us, we are carrying on with the program and all is going to plan!**

We do carry communication devices, for safety purposes, that allow us to communicate short messages to our providers' base camps and to the school. These are used only for regular, but basic, safety-related, and logistical purposes. They are not designed for communicating with large numbers of people but, rather, for keeping our students safe.

ELECTRONICS

A huge part of the benefit of being away on camp or expedition is the opportunity to be in an entirely new learning space. In order to get the most out of each, brief experience, and to ensure participant safety, we ask that the students are present in the moment, paying attention to their surroundings and listening to important safety information. In order to facilitate this, we insist that electronic devices that can connect to cellular or satellite networks are left at home.

This includes (but is not limited to) mobiles, tablets, smart watches, and personal locator beacons. The lack of these items enables our students to focus far more deeply on what they are engaged with, provides a

space in their days for face-to-face communication and play, and of course makes it less likely that a student is distracted during safety briefings.

As a parent or guardian, your assistance in this is greatly appreciated. Please don't allow your child to come away with any of those distracting electronics, and they will have a far better experience as a result.

PROVIDERS

Our program is an extensive one, we aim to provide at least one outdoor experience for every student, every year. The school could not currently manage this on its own and so we rely on outside providers to assist us in organising many of our camps and expeditions.

When choosing suitable providers for a program we consider many criteria, these include:

- ▶ Safety protocols, risk assessments, and crisis management plans from the provider.
- ▶ Logistical competency.
- ▶ The provider's understanding of, and ability to provide for, our learning goals and the SAGES model.
- ▶ The quality of the provider's instructional staff.

In addition, where possible, we will insist that our providers have instructors that stay with a particular group each. This enables them to build a rapport with our students, which in turn helps the students to trust them. This is important in environments with potential hazards and where our students can sometimes be challenged by feeling uncomfortable or vulnerable.

It is important that we build good relationships with our providers because the benefits of working with organisations that know us and understand our way of operating are many. A roster of quality, reliable providers, as we currently have, is one of the most valuable assets that this Outdoor Education program owns.



EQUIPMENT

The kit list that is sent out to parents and students before any outdoor camp, expedition, or experience is perhaps the single most important document for participants of that trip. A great deal of care goes into the list and the equipment that is deemed essential on the list is absolutely vital to the trip. **Nothing on the essential list should be missed out.**

It is not always easy, however, to know what the appropriate sort of equipment is or where to get it, so this section is designed to help with that. However, if you ever have questions regarding Outdoor Education equipment, then please feel free to contact the department on Outdoor.Education@MGGS.vic.edu.au.

QUALITY EQUIPMENT

This next section is aimed at being a guide to you in getting together the right equipment for the day, camp, or expedition that your child is taking part in. Understanding that the participant's enjoyment and safety can be impacted by the type of gear they are carrying or using is vital. So, below is a guide to some of the most important pieces of equipment that each participant will need.

BOOTS

Where the kit list specifies boots should be provided, this is because the students will be undertaking hiking on uneven or slippery ground. Boots are therefore essential to ensure the safety and comfort of the participant. Boots should come up above the ankle to provide support and should have an excellent grip with something like a Vibram sole. Ideally, they would also be waterproof with an internal membrane such as Goretex.



A good quality pair of walking boots

SLEEPING BAG

Sleeping bags can, of course, make or break an outdoor experience. If the bag is too cold or too heavy, it can ruin the enjoyment for the participant and could even impact safety. When looking for a sleeping bag, first check the itinerary, if the camp or expedition includes a hike followed by a camp-out, then you should be looking to supply a smaller, lightweight sleeping bag. In any camp or expedition where the accommodation includes tents, you should also be looking for a 'mummy' type sleeping bag with a hood for extra warmth.

Sleeping bags are also rated for comfort. When choosing your sleeping bag for any given trip, consider the likely overnight temperatures where the trip will be taking place and at that time of year. Choose a bag which has a **comfort rating** within the usual overnight temperature range. Do not consider bags whose comfort limit or extreme limit only are within that usual range.

In addition, a sleeping bag liner can add extra warmth and will prolong the life of the bag by keeping it cleaner. These are available in a range of materials but avoid cotton.



A mummy type sleeping bag with hood

The temperature ranges indicated on a sleeping bag

BACKPACK

For the most part, during any camp or expedition where there is overnight hiking to be done, the providers or the school will provide the backpack for that activity. Occasionally, however, students will be hiking all day without an overnight camp out and, in that situation, they will need to provide their own suitable daypack.

In order to get the most out of the hiking experience, the student will need to be comfortable wearing the backpack all day, and so the following points should be remembered:

- ▶ The school backpack is **not suitable** for hiking any sort of distance and will be very uncomfortable.
- ▶ A daypack shouldn't need to be any more than 35 litres but would need to be bigger than 20 litres in order to ensure that everything needed for the day can be fitted in.
- ▶ The daypack should have adjustable shoulder straps and a waistbelt, this will take strain off the shoulders.
- ▶ An internal frame will make the backpack more comfortable to wear but will increase the cost and, to a certain extent, the weight too.

A useful addition to the backpack is a waterproof liner. This can be something as simple as a sturdy plastic bag such as a garden waste bag, or you can buy outdoor-specific dry bags.



A daypack with padded waistbelt



Roll-top dry bags

WATERPROOF JACKET

A good waterproof jacket is another item that is well worth investing some time in sourcing. Staying dry in the outdoors is important and we do not stop activities if it is raining. When looking for a waterproof, it is worth considering the following points:

- ▶ Always ensure the jacket has a hood, ideally with a peak.
- ▶ The jacket should be waterproofed with a membrane such as Goretex to prevent it from becoming too sweaty.
- ▶ The zip should not be exposed as water can leak through it.
- ▶ The jacket should be longer than waist length.
- ▶ It shouldn't be lined with insulating material (like a ski jacket) as this will be too warm to hike in. Instead, use layers to provide warmth.



Waterproof jacket with peaked hood

NO COTTON

When choosing any clothing for any of our days, camps, or expeditions, **avoid cotton at all costs!** Cotton is very comfortable **as long as it is dry**, but as soon as it becomes damp or wet, it becomes extremely uncomfortable and will wick heat away from the body. Not only can this detract from the overall experience, but it can also be dangerous, particularly when travelling for more than one day through country.

Alternatives include merino wool, polar fleece, or modern sportswear.

WHERE TO BUY

Outdoor gear can be expensive to buy and, when a child is growing rapidly, it can feel daunting to invest so much in equipment or clothing that may be too small next year. It needn't be expensive, however. There are a number of retailers who provide excellent equipment at reasonable prices and MGGs Outdoor Education have negotiated discounts at others. You can even hire the equipment just for the length of the camp or expedition.

PADDY PALLIN

Paddy Pallin is one of the best retailers of outdoor equipment in Victoria. They have an extensive range of top-quality equipment, and their staff are amongst the most knowledgeable. Outdoor Education have negotiated a 20% discount for all staff and students of MGGs attending one of our camps. To access the discount, simply go into one of their stores and tell them which program you will be attending. Alternatively, for each of the camps, Paddy Pallin will also provide a parallel kit list with suggestions for all of the items on the MGGs list. On this document, there will also be a code that you can use for online purchases.



ONE PLANET

One Planet are a Melbourne-based company that manufactures its own clothing and equipment from a factory in Sunshine. Their gear is designed for Australian conditions and much of it is aimed specifically at Outdoor Education programs. Their prices are very reasonable in any case, but they also hire out equipment and clothing for use on camps and expeditions.

Each of our trips will have a link in both the kit list and on the specific eVI page to [CampList](#). Clicking on that link will take you to a site where you simply enter the school's name, click on the right trip from the drop-down menu and the kit list will be there to buy or to hire. A really simple way to get all of the gear in one place.



OTHER RETAILERS

There are plenty of other retailers around that can provide the necessary equipment for our days, camps, and expeditions. In Outdoor Education, we particularly recommend [Decathlon](#), [Anaconda](#), and it is always worth checking out this week's [Aldi Special Buys](#).

DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD

Proud to deliver



DofE AWARD CENTRE

MGGS is a registered Award Centre for the delivery of the Duke of Edinburgh Award. That means that any eligible student wanting to sign up to take part in Duke of Edinburgh (or DofE as it is known), can do so through the school, which can make the process far simpler and easier to manage.

WHAT IS DofE?

According to the [DofE Australia website](#),

“The Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award (the Duke of Ed) is the global leader in the organising and accrediting of non-formal education through its flagship ‘Duke of Ed Framework’. For over 60 years, this Framework has been used by education providers and community organisations to accredit the non-formal learning outcomes and achievements of young people.”

It is a framework that recognises the achievements of young people outside of their formal education and as an international award, it is recognised in 144 countries around the world. It can be begun once a young person turns 14 and they then have until they turn 25 to complete one or more of the three levels, Bronze, Silver, and Gold.

There are four key areas of personal development that a participant must show they have improved in to complete the award: voluntary service; physical recreation, skills, and adventurous journey (with an additional residential project at Gold).

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Framework	Voluntary Service Connecting with the community by giving meaningful service (to others).	Physical Recreation Improving physical fitness and wellbeing, encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle.	Skills Unleashing talents and broadening personal interests and skills.	Adventurous Journey Purposeful adventuring and team building in an unfamiliar environment.	Gold Residential Project A purposeful experience with new people outside their usual place of residence.
Bronze 14 yrs+ Minimum Time: 6 months	3 Months	3 Months	3 Months	2 Days/1 Night <small>Practice Journey/s Qualifying Journey</small>	N/A <small>(Gold Level only)</small>
Averaging 1 hour a week. Plus an additional 3 Months for a major section in Voluntary Service, Physical Recreation or Skills.					
Silver 15 yrs+ Minimum Time: 6 months	6 Months	6 Months	6 Months	3 Days/2 Nights <small>Practice Journey/s Qualifying Journey</small>	N/A <small>(Gold Level only)</small>
Averaging 1 hour a week. Plus an additional 6 Months for a major section if the Bronze Award was not completed.					
Gold 16 yrs+ Minimum Time: 12 months	12 Months	12 Months	12 Months	4 Days/3 Nights <small>Practice Journey/s Qualifying Journey</small>	5 Days/4 Nights
Averaging 1 hour a week. Plus an additional 6 Months for a major section if the Silver Award was not completed.					

YEAR 8 LAUNCH – TERM 4

The DofE is designed to be an award that participants work towards independently with minimal input from their school or from other adults. However, as an Award Centre, we do offer support and assistance to Grammarians undertaking the DofE.

Any student over the age of 14 can sign up whenever they like but we do hold a launch for DofE in Term 4 for next year's Year 9 students. At this event, we explain the process of signing up to MGS as the Award Centre, we offer some practical advice, and we invite a representative from the DofE organisation to come in and talk some more about what is involved in completing the award. Dates for this will be sent out closer to the time.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information, including the current cost of program sign-up, and details of how to sign up, can be found on the [DofE eVI page](#).



PERSONNEL

MGGS OUTDOOR EDUCATION TEAM

HEAD OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION

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