



Maribyrnong Primary School

A Five-Star School



"It's everyone's business, and more than just the school, it's the community as well; it's bringing people along and getting everyone involved."

*Jennifer Howard, Principal,
via ABC News,
23 March 2017*

Background

Maribyrnong Primary School has 430 students. Due to the active involvement of the whole-school community, the school has been awarded a **Five-Star Accreditation** from **Actsmart Schools**.

Vision

One of Maribyrnong's key values is 'inclusion', which focuses on ensuring students and the community are involved and feel ownership of sustainability initiatives. Students are taught that the small things they do together can make a big difference to the world.

Sustainability Initiatives

Waste

- Maribyrnong Primary School has been able to maintain and expand its recycling systems over many years. All bins are in waste stations that are marked with stickers explaining what can go in the bin. The school also uses a worm farm and compost bins to avoid sending organic material to landfill.

- Waste-free Wednesdays are part of the school's culture. Students are encouraged to bring lunch boxes, foil or paper wrappings. This is significantly reducing the amount of cling wrap, zip lock bags and chip packets being brought to school and sent to landfill.
- Teachers act as litter monitors in the playground to reinforce good behaviours. Students spotted picking up litter get a raffle ticket to go into a weekly draw for the Litter Legend Award.





Water

- Rainwater is collected in tanks and used for flushing toilets.
- Stickers are placed by taps to remind staff and students to save water.

Biodiversity and School Grounds

- The **Actsmart Schools Horticulturalist** visited and provided advice on the positioning of the garden beds and maintenance of citrus trees.
- Students took an active role in managing the native bee hotel, the worm farm and bird boxes.
- Strawberries, corn, peas, lettuce, tomato, spinach and herbs were grown in the garden.
- The playground is dominated by many native plants that have been strategically located to provide screening from the summer sun. The school received free native plants from Greening Australia.
- A new green house was built using money the school received after winning the Actsmart Carbon Challenge. A sensory garden is being planted next to it.
- Extra outdoor seating has been provided to encourage staff and students to use the school grounds for reading and lessons.



Curriculum

- The school's **Sustainability Coordinator** has directed the students' natural curiosity and willingness to explore many exciting environmental projects.
- Teachers actively embed sustainability topics into their teaching, guided by the Australian Curriculum.
- The year 5/6 classes do a unit on sustainability and conservation where they look at endangered animals and environments, habitat loss and what we can do about it. The year 3/4 classes include sustainability as part of their Indigenous Australians unit.
- The whole school participates in events such as Earth Hour. Teachers encourage discussion in the classroom on why Earth Hour is important, linking where practicable to other topics. Whole school involvement in sustainability events is scheduled into the school calendar to allow teaching staff to plan for cross-curriculum activities.





Energy

- The school received a lighting upgrade and a solar panel system through the Education Directorate.
- The school's Power Rangers team received an **Energy Action Kit** from **Actsmart Schools**. The Power Rangers monitor the classrooms to see if any lights or interactive whiteboards have been left on or if windows and doors are left open. A trophy is presented to the Champion Energy Saving Class at assembly each month.
- Maribyrnong families participated in the Actsmart Carbon Challenge in 2016. In total, Maribyrnong school community saved 378 249.98kg of emissions, with over 100 families involved! The school was rewarded with \$1500 to go towards sustainability initiatives.



Results and Benefits

- Maribyrnong Primary School recognises the importance of sustainability practices within the school and encourages sharing with families at home.
- Students have an understanding of sustainability issues and take pride in their positive environmental impact and sense of shared achievement.
- The school has recorded a reduction in energy bills and the amount of waste going to landfill.
- Some of the results included personal knowledge such as learning the meaning of plastics classification symbols.



Hints and Tips

- Consistent effort creates behaviour change. This takes time so be committed and patient. Continually reinforce messages at assemblies and for new students (have older students mentor the younger students).
- Prioritise one topic (such as energy reduction) at a time.
- Foster the school community's involvement and ownership of programs: students, teachers, school office and facilities staff and families. Students educate their parents and siblings at home.
- Have a student team promote student engagement and buy-in of initiatives. To be part of the Power Rangers team senior students must complete an application form and agree to give some of their lunch time.
- Provide rewards for classes doing the right thing or making an effort.
- Be resourceful and creative in funding projects. The school asked for donations for gardening equipment from Bunnings and plants from Greening Australia. They sought support from the P&C to purchase rainwater tanks and asked for parent help and family participation in the Carbon Challenge via the school newsletter. They looked for specials at Aldi (raised garden beds) and entered competitions with prize money, applied for grants (e.g. Science Week) and shopped at the Green Shed (re-use facility).
- Attend *Actsmart Schools* Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) accredited workshops and get a visit from Actsmart School staff. Maribyrnong's Sustainability Coordinator has attended and presented at the professional development workshops and the Eco Bus tour organised by *Actsmart Schools*.



Challenges

- Keeping up enthusiasm across the school every year! Look for innovative ways to keep messages fresh.
- Infrastructure changes (door sealing, upgrading light fixtures) can be costly for the school to undertake itself.