

Welcome to the third edition of our school newsletter.

A key highlight of this edition is a showcase of Music and the Creative Arts, one of our school's pillars. I trust the contents celebrate and reflect the many successes and initiatives in this area across our broader school community.

Along this theme, I congratulate our Music Department, led by **Mr Sam Bugeja** (Director of Music) and **Mr Navin Gulavita** (Director of Instrumental Music), on the Ashwood High School Jazz Band's outstanding performance at the North-Eastern Victoria Region Youth Concert on Wednesday 13 May 2026. Further congratulations to **Jane Lee** of Year 11, who performed in the percussion section of the Youth Symphony Orchestra at this event. More details and photos are featured in Mr Bugeja's article.

Ashwood Revealed – Open Day and Open Night – Wednesday 29 April 2026

It was our great pleasure to host another highly successful Ashwood Revealed for prospective students and their families. We welcomed more than 800 attendees across the day, who had the opportunity to participate in school tours, hear the Acting Principal's address, and learn more about the many aspects of Ashwood High School that continue to enhance and sustain the outstanding educational opportunities we provide for our students.

All staff were in attendance to showcase the wonderful programs and opportunities our school offers, with more than 150 students also giving their time in the evening to support the event. Our future is bright indeed.

Ms Meg McLellan
Acting Principal





Building Works Update – Outdoor Classroom; Covered Outdoor Learning Area; Interior Redesign of Building B

It was a pleasure to meet with the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) and assigned architect in recent weeks to discuss further planned building works commencing imminently. The priorities for upgrades include:

- A Covered Outdoor Learning Area over our pre-existing plexipave tennis courts. The provision of this new facility will enable a year-round, weather independent space for Health and PE, and for gathering of students under cover from sun, rain and wind during break times.
- The interior redesign of Building B – to include internal walls – supporting students and staff with defined spaces to enhance teaching and learning.

One further point on building works worth sharing is the progress, and planned opening of our outdoor classroom – located near the canteen. We have recently signed off on plans and look forward to updating this space for the prospect of learning and a refreshed space for students to enjoy their lunch at breaktimes. On behalf of the entire school community, we are extremely grateful to the **Parents and Friends Network** for their fundraising efforts who have paid in full the cost of this beautiful and highly useful upgrade to our facilities.

School Review – Tuesday 19 May 2026

Ashwood High School undertook our School Review on Tuesday 19 May 2026.

As part of Department of Education processes, the one-day review brought together panel members to reflect on Ashwood High School's achievements under our current School Strategic Plan (2022–2026) and, through data analysis, consultation, and collaboration, began the development of our next Strategic Plan.

I look forward to sharing further updates with our school community in due course.



COMMUNITY

of Learning and Trust

Spotlight on Co-Curricular Programs



Ms Ruby Cameron

*Acting Director of Student Voice,
Inclusion and Agency*



Ashwood High School's co-curricular programs are a vibrant part of school life, offering students the opportunity to explore interests, build new skills, and connect with others beyond the classroom. This year there are 22 clubs on offer to students, including 4 new additions: Lego Club, Lion Dance Troupe, Mood Booster Club, and Puzzle Time Club. From sport and the arts to leadership and special interest clubs, there is something for everyone to get involved in.

To bring these opportunities to life, we hosted a Student Clubs Showcase in Term 1. The event was a lively and engaging way for students to discover what is on offer, with interactive displays, conversations with staff and student leaders, and plenty of inspiration to try something new. Students can join a club at any time and can always see what club is running on a given day by looking at the Student Clubs Handbook on Compass under 'School Documentation' or checking their Compass Events. We encourage all students to get involved in at least one co-curricular activity this year, whether it is trying something new or continuing a long-standing interest. Many of our clubs also provide opportunities for students to take on leadership roles, supporting the development of student voice and agency across the school.

Student Testimonials:

"Drama Club is soooooo much fun, there are so many good drama-related games, and then at the end of the year we put on a mini play, that we rehearse in the second half of the year."

Mihika Sen (Year 8)

"Ashbook Club is a great way to meet new people and find new reads and recommendations, and always a space to 'gossip' about your favourite books and rant about others (or terrible movie adaptations)!"

Katania Major (Year 9)



COMMUNITY

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Alpine School for Student Leadership Reflection



Ms Andrea Van Olst
Student Leadership Coordinator

During Term 1, five Year 9 students had the amazing opportunity of attending the School for Student Leadership (SSL), based at the Snowy River Campus.

Carmen Blackwood, Hayden Knight, Thomas Perillo-Phipps, Lilly Scott and Emile Stolwyk took on the challenge of staying at the SSL residential school for almost 9 weeks, pushing themselves well out of their comfort zones. Here is their reflection of their experiences.

"Our time at SSL was one of the most challenging, rewarding, and memorable experiences we've ever had. We learnt so much about nine key learning concepts of SSL; resilience, respectful relationships, health and wellbeing, emotional management, learning strategies, identity, empathy, collaboration, and environments.

We were all worried that we would be homesick, being away for nine weeks with only one visiting weekend felt intense, but there was always so much happening that we barely had time to think about it, and the amazing support from peers made everything easier.

From the moment we arrived in Marlo, met our roommates, and settled into living, learning, eating, and sleeping alongside 42 other students, we were pushed to become more organised and independent; managing our own washing, keeping our rooms tidy, and staying on time for classes, which was difficult at first but we quickly got in line with the routines.

At the core of SSL is their outdoor program with surfing, caving, mountain biking and canoeing. We also participated in two major expeditions that really tested our resilience and teamwork. Expo 1 was a three-day bush and beach hike of approximately 25 km (with 20kg packs!), where we saw whale bones, snakeskin, orcas and wombats, finishing with a refreshing canoe and swim. Expo 2 was a three-day, 100 km bike ride from Bairnsdale to Orbost! At first, the expeditions seemed scary, but with the help of the camp instructors and the people around us, we were able to have the best time.

Overall, SSL taught us life skills that regular school simply can't, and the combination of community, challenge, and learning made it an unforgettable and highly recommended experience.

When I arrived, I was a little nervous about meeting 42 strangers that I would live with for the next term, but in the first week we were all friends and that nervous feeling completely disappeared."

Hayden Knight (Year 9)

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"This experience was one of the best I could have ever been accepted to, and it has grown my leadership skills physically, mentally, and socially. After sharing an experience like SSL with forty-odd other students, you form bonds that would be unachievable anywhere else."

Lilly Scott (Year 9)

"My favourite concept was 'environments' because it taught me to slow down and really notice the world around me. Exploring the East Gippsland area during these classes created some of my favourite memories of the entire camp. Even though the Expo 1 hike was such a struggle (hiking along the sand) I am so glad I finished, because I pushed past my comfort zone and now, I know I can do uncomfortable things."

Emile Stolwyk (Year 9)

"The whole camp really tested our resilience and grit - it was quite challenging but also really rewarding."

Thomas Perillo-Phipps (Year 9)

"I learnt more about being confident in myself, I improved my collaboration and time management skills, I have begun to like the natural environment more and I have grown as a person."

Carmen Blackwood (Year 9)





HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Aspire to be Your Personal Best

Science Learning Area Report



Ms Stephanie Richards
Science Learning Area Coordinator

The new Year 9 Zoology (STEAM) elective has had an exciting and successful start in Semester 1, with students enthusiastically exploring animal biology through hands-on learning experiences and field-based investigations. The subject has quickly become a highlight for many students, combining scientific inquiry with opportunities to care for and observe a range of living organisms.

One of the standout experiences this semester was the successful dissection of a small shark. Students have also completed their first assessment task which involved creating a detailed field guide to animals found in the local area. The project encouraged students to develop their scientific research, classification, and communication skills while increasing their awareness of biodiversity within our community.

The Zoology room has also welcomed several new animal additions this term. Three frogs have joined the collection, with one already named "Google". The remaining two frogs will soon be named through a student competition to be announced by **Mr Luke Goss**. Over the summer holidays, the stick insects also experienced a very successful breeding season, resulting in a large number of new hatchlings now being cared for by students during classes.

As the semester continues, students are looking forward to further practical investigations and opportunities to expand their understanding of animal behaviour, ecology, and conservation. The strong engagement and enthusiasm shown by the Year 9 Zoology students has made the launch of this new elective a fantastic success.



HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Aspire to be Your Personal Best

Exams Process Years 7 to 11



Mr Dom Holloway
Senior School Student Outcomes
Leader

With the end of Semester 1 approaching, Semester Exams are once again front of mind for our students. In 2026, the exam process remains consistent with previous years by allowing students to prepare and undertake exam processes aligned with their ultimate exam experience – their VCAA exams at the end of Year 12.

To this end, students will undertake exams in a cascading sequence that builds confidence across each student's high school journey. The exam calendar for Years 7-10 reflects this ethos:

- Years 7 and 8 – English and Maths
- Year 9 – English, Maths, Humanities, Science
- Year 10 – all subjects undertaken in the semester

At Year 11, the exam experience mirrors that of the Year 12 exam process, with exams distributed across a two-week period. Year 11 exams, which do not contribute to student VCE outcomes, thus provide a valuable opportunity for students to gauge their progress in their VCE subjects with an eye to identifying areas for improvement in their study, revision and timed assessment skills.

In 2026, we have also undertaken a Practice General Achievement Test (GAT) for all Year 11 students. Occurring in Week 1 of Term 2, all Year 11 students undertook a Practice GAT identical to their upcoming GAT process for Year 12, with students undertaking VCE subjects completing both sections of the GAT in two sessions on the same day. To complete this process, external markers are currently assessing student Practice GAT results, to again provide valuable data on where students sit in their learning journey prior to the all-important Year 12 assessment.

The exam period for all students begins on Monday 1 June 2026.





OPTIMISM

Reflection and Resilience

House Performing Arts Festival (HPAF)



Ms Charley Lethlean
House Performing Arts Producer

The 2026 House Performing Arts Festival (HPAF) is officially underway, with students beginning the exciting process of developing original performance works inspired by the theme: 'Ashwood High School's World of Dr Seuss.' Students are separated into their Houses, with each House allocated a different Dr Seuss text to explore through acting, music, dance, and stagecraft.



Cowan House will present *The Lorax*, focusing on environmental responsibility, community care, and the importance of protecting the world around us. Flynn House will present *The Cat in the Hat*, exploring imagination versus responsibility through a playful and chaotic theatrical style. Melba House has been assigned *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, examining how community and kindness can overcome isolation and negativity. Paterson House will bring *Yertle the Turtle*, focusing on leadership, empathy, and equality.

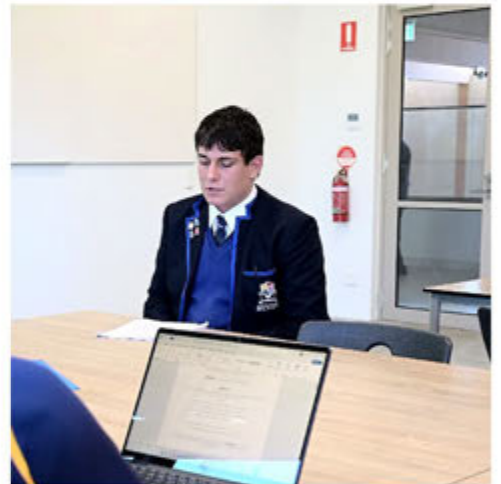
Each House has appointed a House Captain (Director), Music Captain, and Dance Captain, who will collaboratively lead rehearsals, support performers, and help shape each production's creative direction. Students have completed the audition process and also developed initial script drafts, all set within the context of Ashwood High School while integrating the themes of their allocated Dr Seuss story.

Music plays a central role in this year's festival, with students composing original songs alongside adapting existing music to support storytelling and performance. Across acting, music, and dance, students are working collaboratively to create engaging and meaningful productions that reflect their House's unique interpretation.



OPTIMISM

Reflection and Resilience



The House Performing Arts Festival is open to all students, offering opportunities both on and off the stage, including acting, backstage and technical roles, music, dance, props, set design, costume creation, leadership, publicity, and production support. The festival celebrates student voice, creativity, and collaboration, ensuring every student can contribute to bringing their House production to life. Our CHOIR Values of **Community, High Expectations, Optimism, Innovation, and Respect** underpin the process.

As rehearsals continue, excitement is building across the school community for what promises to be a vibrant, imaginative, and highly collaborative 2026 House Performing Arts Festival.





OPTIMISM

Reflection and Resilience

Athletics Carnival



Mr Tom Grbac
Director of Sport



Mr Declan McLaughlin
Assistant Director of Sport

Fast Feet, Flying Relays and Questionable Dance Moves: Ashwood High School's 2026 Athletics Carnival!

The Ashwood High School Athletics Carnival, held on Monday 4 May 2026, was a fantastic celebration of athleticism, teamwork and school spirit. Students from all year levels took to the track and field with enthusiasm, competing in a wide range of events including sprints, relays, high jump, long jump and shot put. Whether chasing personal bests, cheering on teammates from the sidelines or simply enjoying the carnival atmosphere, students embraced the day with energy and positivity. The competitive spirit was strong throughout the carnival, but so too was the encouragement and camaraderie shown between students and Houses.

Adding to the excitement were the colourful House chants, enthusiastic supporters and plenty of memorable moments both on and off the track. From dramatic relay finishes to students discovering hidden athletic talents, the day showcased the vibrant spirit of the Ashwood community. A huge congratulations goes to Paterson House, who claimed the overall Athletics Carnival victory after consistently strong performances across all events. Their teamwork, participation and determination earned them well-deserved bragging rights for the year.

Special recognition must also go to our outstanding Age Group Champions: **Catherine Zhou, Aiden Smith, Sophie Stafford, Liam Grist, Neve Simpson, Oyvind Nkyekyer, Natasha Sturrock, Jack Dvorak, Bella Poynter-Rabey, James Karalexis, Erika Ting and Jimmy Dvorak.** Their exceptional efforts, commitment and sporting achievements were a highlight of the carnival and an inspiration to their peers. Thank you to all students, staff and organisers who contributed to making the day such a memorable and successful event for everyone involved.





INNOVATION

Reflection and Resilience

Spotlight on Music at Ashwood High School



Mr Sam Bugeja
Director of Music



Mr Navin Gulavita
Director of Instrumental Music

2026 has already been a vibrant and eventful year for the musicians of Ashwood High School. Our Instrumental Music and Ensemble Program is progressing nicely as the students prepare to present the fruits of all of their practice and rehearsals at the upcoming Winter Concert.

On Wednesday 13 May 2026, the astounding musical skills of our amazing students were on grand display at the 2026 NEVR Youth Concert, at which government-school students of the North-Eastern Victoria Region come together at Hamer Hall to perform. We were lucky enough to be represented by the exceptional **Jane Lee** (Year 11), who played timpani in the Symphony Orchestra and brought down the house at the finale of the concert. **Jane Lee** (Year 11) also joined **Nathaniel Arnold-Moore** (Year 12), **Thomas Duckworth** (Year 12), **Tarik Srinivasan** (Year 11) and **Kenan Wong** (Year 12) as part of the Ashwood High School Jazz Ensemble, who played music in the foyer of Hamer Hall to open the concert. Well done!

Meanwhile, our wonderful Music Captains, **Grace Lee** (Year 12) and **Miranda Cheng** (Year 9) have been hard at work, planning, designing and executing ways to improve the school's Music Program. One of their most major initiatives so far is the currently in-development Ashwood High School Music Bulletin Board that we will be populating with all of the news, important events and information surrounding, funnily enough, Music at Ashwood High School. It will be located in Building C between C05 and C06.



We are also continuing to put on our Friday Lunchtime Concerts. This series of concerts is another feature of Music at Ashwood that is expertly organised and hosted by our Music Captains, **Grace** and **Miranda**. It gives students a wonderful and supportive environment in which to showcase their musical gifts and talents. The audience of students is always very welcoming and positive so if you would like to try out performing for an audience for the first time or practise for an upcoming event, it is a great atmosphere in which to do so! Even if you are thinking about it, please come and watch as an audience member to see what it's all about. Of course, if you are interested in performing or attending a Lunchtime Concert, please speak to one of our esteemed Music Captains, Music Teachers or find the sign-up sheet on the aforementioned Music Bulletin Board.

INNOVATION

Reflection and Resilience



The first concert of the year, the Autumn Senior Soiree has already taken place, to the rapturous ovation of the audience. You can find a detailed and unbiased review of the concert in the last edition of this newsletter. Up next, we have the Winter Concert occurring on Wednesday 17 June 2026. It is a big and wonderful event with all members and ensembles of the Middle and Senior Schools joining in. We will be in touch with more information and ticket booking links in the near future.





INNOVATION

Creativity and Sustainability

STEAM At Ashwood High School & Monash Tech School Excursions



Mr Rob Gray

Middle School Student Outcomes Leader

Term 2 has been an exciting time of year for the STEAM curriculum at Ashwood High School. All Year 8 classes attended two days of excursions at Monash Tech School on campus at Monash University, participating in the Superhabitats Program. Students learned how to design and create sustainable environments, applying principles of robotic engineering to protect keystone species and using technical equipment to engineer the correct balance of humidity, light and temperature to create the right conditions for growing various plant species for food.

Students of Year 10 Engineering, Year 10 Design Technologies, and Year 9 Digital Design have been working with the 3D printers and laser cutter in the FabLab, applying CNC technologies to create wind turbines, key chains, key rings and jewellery projects that they have designed themselves. The opportunity to actually manufacture and assemble the parts of engineered and designed projects provides an excellent real-world context for theoretical skills and knowledge.



Ashwood High School gives students the opportunity to participate in a wide range of competitions, many of which are run by the Australian Maths Trust. The Australian Mathematics Competition (AMC) involves the use of mathematical knowledge and skills to solve a range of problems. The Computational and Algorithmic Thinking Competition (CAT), ran on Wednesday 20 May 2026, allowed students to challenge their pattern recognition skills, and use them to algorithmically solve problems with real-life contexts. A new competition that will be run later in 2026, the Raspberry Pi Foundation Coding Challenge, is a short programming competition that is open for students of all skill levels to apply their coding knowledge and skills to complete a set goal. Many students from the school also participate in more advanced competitions, including the International Chemistry Competition, and the Australian Intermediate Mathematics Olympiad. The variety of competitions run at Ashwood High School allows students to apply and extend their skills outside of the classroom, preparing them for a strong career.

Mitchell Chin, STEAM Prefect (Year 11)



RESPECT

for Teachers, Students, School and Community

Important Reminders - AToSS



Ms Sarah Reynolds
Senior School Assistant Principal



Mrs Caroline Servadei
Acting Middle School Assistant Principal

As we reach the halfway point of the term, it's clear that our school community has been thriving. The past weeks have been a whirlwind of activity, from a highly successful Athletics Carnival to the excitement of the Year 11 and 12 School Formal, energetic Sporting Days, and inspiring excursions to the Monash Tech School. Alongside these events, rich learning has continued across classrooms, with students embracing new challenges and opportunities.

With assessments underway and exams just around the corner, it's a busy period, but also an incredibly rewarding one. The commitment, enthusiasm, and resilience shown by our students and staff make this a truly fulfilling time in the school year.

This time of the year is also an opportunity for students to provide feedback on their attitudes to and experience at school through the annual Department of Education Attitudes to School Survey (AToSS).

All students from Year 7 to Year 12 in government schools complete the survey across Victoria. The survey provides data that helps both our school and the Department of Education understand student perspectives of their school and improve the schooling experience. Data collected includes how students feel in relation to their school, their learning, peer relationships, resilience, bullying, health and wellbeing, physical activity, and life in general. Data from the survey is used to inform school improvement and planning to support student learning and wellbeing.

All students at Ashwood High School will be completing the survey over the next two weeks. Thank you to **Ms Sachael Miller** for running the survey at the school and to all students for your honest feedback of your learning experience at Ashwood High School.





KEY DATES

Tuesday 26 May	Mullum Division Cross Country
Tuesday 26 May	Year 10 Subject Selection Evening and Future Focused Careers Fair
1 - 11 June	Years 7-11 Exam Period
Thursday 4 June	Year 8 Interschool Sport
Monday 8 June	King's Birthday Public Holiday
Thursday 11 June	Region Cross Country Carnival
Thursday 11 June	Year 7 Immunisations
Friday 12 June	Report Writing Day (Pupil Free Day)
Tuesday 16 June	General Achievement Test (GAT) Units 3&4 VCE Studies
Wednesday 17 June	Ashwood High School Winter Music Concert
Friday 19 June	Year 7 Interschool Sport
22 - 24 June	Year 10 Camp - Waratah Beach
Friday 26 June	End of Term Two