

Defence School Mentor (DSM)



Mt Maria College Strong mind - Compassionate heart

The DSM's role is to support and assist Defence students and their families as they integrate into the Mt Maria School community and throughout the school year particularly during times of transition and absence. The program is funded by the Department of Defence and the DSM is an employee of Mt Maria College. The role is responsible to the Principal of the school and is provided on a part-time basis.

The DSM provides a link between school and the family that compliments the support services offered by the school, whilst recognising the unique challenges faced by mobile Defence families.


Sally Lawler, DSM at Mt Maria College, works to minimise the impact of mobility on student's education and provides support to children of Defence families in a range of ways:


- Provide ongoing support to students with their integration into the Mt Maria School community.
- Monitoring the social and emotional wellbeing of Defence students.
- Assisting students develop self-confidence, self-reliance and resilience.
- Enhancing awareness and appreciation of the unique Defence lifestyle within our school community.
- Providing support to students during times of parental absence.
- Involve Defence students in commemorative services such as ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day.
- Facilitating student participation in cultural, sporting, academic and personal development programs.
- Assist families with their transition from the Australian Defence Force to civilian life.
- Providing onsite, direct and flexible assistance to students, their families, teachers and other support staff.
- Work to improve the understanding of the challenges faced by ADF young people among students, staff and the broader community.



Contact the DSM



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What can the DSM do for Students

- Facilitate the best possible outcome for ADF young people by recognising and working to address unique needs.
- Provide programs that address needs - ie social isolation, absence support, resilience, confidence building.
- Encourage friendships and reduce isolation by connecting young people to their community within school and more broadly.
- Encourage students that they are not alone in their experience.
- Facilitate the development of pride and a sense of belonging in the school by ensuring the student's efforts to contribute to the school are recognised
- Support new students to adapt to a different way of doing things, while acknowledging that change is not always comfortable or easy.
- Organising welcome and farewell activities and highlight their achievements whilst at the college.

What can the DSM do for Families

- Provide a point of contact for parents and young people.
- Act as a link between home and school.
- Encourage the development of informal and formal support networks.
- Support ADF families to develop social groups with other families.
- Provide referrals to external agencies.
- Liaise with both school staff and other support agencies to develop innovative programs to reduce the impact of frequent postings on ADF personnel and their families.
- Support for students and families during times of parental absence and deployment.



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