

# 2024 SCHOOL SURVEY REPORT



MILKWOOD STEINER SCHOOL (DJANDJAG)  
REPORT PREPARED OCTOBER, 2024



# OVERVIEW

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The Annual School Survey collects feedback from parents of Milkwood Steiner School students.

Quantitative and qualitative data is collected through the Survey. This data is analysed in this report. This analysis provides the school with insight into parent perceptions of Milkwood Steiner School's performance, culture and service in the year 2024.

2024 saw strong and consistent parent participation in the Survey with 55 detailed responses, and I acknowledge the time and care parents took in completing it. This survey is an essential part of a bigger picture which guides our focus areas for improvement in 2025.

## **NETANELA MIZRAHI**

Principal, Milkwood Steiner School  
Larrakia Country, 2024



# HOW DO PARENTS FEEL ABOUT MILKWOOD?

In 2024, all parents strongly agreed or agreed that their child likes being at school. 98% agreed or strongly agreed that their child feels safe and makes good progress at Milkwood, and 96% agreed or strongly agreed that Milkwood supports their child to love learning. The overwhelming perception by parents is that Milkwood's educators are highly skilled, although 6% of respondents answered "I don't know" to this question. Except for one response, all parents stated that Milkwood acts with the best interests of children at heart. Most parents agreed or strongly agreed that Milkwood supported their child's individual learning needs and works with them to support their child's learning. 95% of parents perceived that their child's culture and diversity is reflected in Milkwood's curriculum, although one parent strongly disagreed with this statement and three parents responded "I don't know". Most parents strongly agree or agree that student behaviour is well managed at Milkwood, although some comments indicated resistance towards inclusive classrooms that welcome students with Trauma and disability due to a perceived negative impact of this on neurotypical students. A greater number of comments praised the school's approach to inclusion. The diversity in these comments suggests a need for more focused adult education in 2025 on the benefits of inclusive classrooms for all children, to increase the confidence of parents in the school's commitment to inclusion.

Milkwood parents were asked to rate their satisfaction with Milkwood's Specialist programs. These have been consistently valued by Milkwood parents, and were increasingly valued in 2024. Milkwood's Festivals, Indigenous Knowledge, Outdoor Classroom and Music programs were rated particularly highly in 2024 by parents.

Parents are grateful for the role of Milkwood in their family and community. Overwhelming warmth and gratitude towards the school, its educators, leadership and specialist programs were expressed in parent comments in this year's survey.

Constructive feedback appeared too. This included suggestions to avoid release time for teachers at the beginning of the day to support younger children to settle. Some comments sought improved communication from teachers and specialist teachers regarding support interventions, although others praised this aspect of the school's communication strategies and supports. One parent suggested an Orientation Day at the beginning of the school year to help their child. One comment praised small class sizes and another voiced challenges with understanding a composite class's curriculum considerations. Milkwood Steiner School works hard to apply an Anti-Oppressive lens to its curriculum, pedagogy and spaces. A comment about "inappropriate topics" in the library reminds the school to continue engaging with adult education about diversity and inclusion. This comment also acknowledged the importance of listening to others opinions; our community is diverse, and even this comment reminds us that difference of opinion or world views are important and welcome at Milkwood.

# WHAT DO PARENTS THINK ABOUT MILKWOOD'S MISSION AND VALUES?

Milkwood's parents strongly state their support for Milkwood's mission and values. They perceive that at Milkwood, the Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework is adapted to the local culture and environment of our community. Parents perceive the visibility of Milkwood's commitment to sustainability, learning and growth, adapting to time and place and continuous self-improvement. 96% of Milkwood parents would recommend Milkwood to other families.

Parents describe Milkwood's values as authentic, present, and visible. One comment wished for more visible support for the school's LGBTQIA+ community and for queer young people, seeking more vocal support by the school to standing with LGBTQIA+ people, including children, parents and the wider community. Some parents highlighted the strengths of the school's educators and leadership in modelling the school's values, and some parents perceived times when day-to-day classroom interactions might not reflect all the school's values. One parent perceived that the school over-valued decolonisation, and that such values were not aligned with their own perception of Rudolf Steiner Education. Other comments highlighted how vital critical reflection of curriculum is for maintaining cultural safety and the wellbeing of their children and families.



# COMMUNICATION

In 2024, the majority of parents stated they received the most relevant information about their child through student profiles (student reports), parent-teacher interviews,, parent-teacher meetings initiated by the parent, informal conversations with their child’s teacher (e.g. on the veranda at pick up time) and class information nights. 1 in 4 parents received relevant information about their child through an Educational Adjustment Plan or other specialist reports/interventions. Parents stated that the most relevant information they acquired about the school was received through the newsletter (96%) and written communication from the Principal (80%). About half of parents also received relevant information about the school from its Social Media, written communication from the Administration and Enrolments Officer, the school Website, Adult Education sessions and the Annual Report. Under 30% of parents received relevant information about the school through the AGM, the Board, school policies and School Tours. One parent stated that they rarely/never read the newsletter. 15% of parents read the newsletter sometimes and 83% always read the newsletter. 86% of parents feel well informed about their child’s progress at Milkwood, while 13% “somewhat disagreed” with this statement. Almost all parents felt well informed about what is happening at Milkwood generally and knew who to speak to when they have questions or concerns about their child or the school. When parents communicate with the school, almost all stated that they received a timely response, felt heard and were satisfied with the response. Milkwood parents feel very comfortable bringing concerns to their child’s teacher. Almost all feel comfortable bringing concerns to the Principal. In 2024, there was a reduction in parents’ comforte bringing concerns to the Board: 42% felt comfortable and 58% either felt uncomfortable or did not know).



# ADULT EDUCATION & CONTRIBUTION

Participating in adult education and volunteering was perceived by parents as benefiting their children, supporting their own adult education and improving their family's experience of school. The top areas of adult learning that parents want to access at Milkwood in 2025 are:

1. Steiner Education
2. Indigenous Knowledge
3. Steiner Philosophy
4. Child Development
5. Artistic/Craft experiences
6. The local environment and history
7. Health and Nutrition
8. Anthroposophy
9. Lewis Deep Democracy
10. Parenting



In 2024, parents contributed most of their volunteer time at festivals, fundraising, class jobs, volunteering in class and working bees, showing no apparent change since 2023 in areas of contribution. Just like in 2023, 9% of parents did not volunteer at the school in 2024. Parents say that the greatest barriers to being able to contribute in the ways they want to at Milkwood are commitments to paid work, caring responsibilities and scheduling conflicts. A small but significant number of parents stated that other volunteering commitments prevented them contributing more at Milkwood. In contrast to 2023, the 2024 parent survey indicated that parents now perceived themselves as having the relevant skills and that they had been asked to contribute, whereas last year, these featured more prominently as barriers to participation.



# WHY MILKWOOD?

Significant themes emerging from parent responses to why Milkwood is their school of choice included:

- Cultural safety and inclusion
- Values
- The Arts
- Sacredness of childhood
- Responsive to individual needs of the child
- Tech-free
- Quality of staff and leadership
- Festivals and community
- Authentic Indigenous teaching and leadership
- My child is happy, safe and nurtured
- Nature and Outdoor Learning



# YOUR REASONS!

Milkwood is our school of choice for its gentle, whole-child approach to learning, where creativity and hands-on experiences are woven into everyday classroom life. The main lesson structure offers the time and space for deeper exploration, while music and the arts naturally enrich the learning journey. The school's strong connection to the wider community, alongside its deep respect for Country, culture, and nature, fosters a nurturing environment for growth and belonging.

I love it's values and how these are truly lived and reflected day to day in the school and the classes. It is a very thoughtful calm and safe space.

We value Milkwood's vision to bring Steiner education to this time and place on Larrakia country. We also highly value the arts, and that Milkwood is a school where our children are seen and valued as individuals.

Nurturing environment, community spirit, sacredness of childhood, raising a generation of kind people

It is most aligned with our family values. The festivals, indigenous knowledges integration, diversity and approach to respectful child development are fantastic.

my kid really likes it

Cultural diversity and differences are valued and acknowledged

I appreciate that Milkwood has a different way of viewing education. Not seeing my child as a thing to be chipped away at to meet a specific size or shape, but instead as a fire to be lit, a foundation that can be built upon which is unique to them. It is nice to feel that, even when my child doesn't 'fit the mould' that there is a place for them to be celebrated here at school.

It supports my values as a parent and supports my kid being a kid. I had my son in a regular school and he was getting homework at the age of 4, they had also told my nephew that he needed to learn how to hold a pencil properly even though he could write perfectly fine the way he held his pen. They don't let kids be kids and they force them to do things in a straight line, where all the kids are taught to be the same. This is why I love Steiner they just let kids be kids but also tailor programs for the individuals. I love that my son comes home, helps out in the kitchen, waters the garden and talks about culture not because he has to but because he learns it at school and enjoys it. I absolutely love this school and the community within the school.

Suits my child's personality and her learning style

The need for something completely different from what we had already tried, very thankful to have found it here at milkwood.



Child centred learning that isn't mainstream. Limited/no tech in classrooms ie no ipads, computers etc. Focus on nature.

My wife really wanted our daughter to attend.

It is nurturing and supportive of my child's spirit

It's an extremely welcoming environment for children and families of diverse backgrounds. It offers diverse and creative ways to educate which can result in better learning outcomes for some children.

The pedagogy, the staff, connection to Time and Place, the festivals, music program, Netanela.

Alternate approach to mainstream education, incredible teachers to both of our students, friendship and sense of supportive community with the parents of each of the class parents, my children are welcome and supported to be their authentic selves, we LOVE the end of term Festivals and the memories they create, the whole school vibe when we walk through the front gate - students of all ages and year levels are interacting and/or playing together

Child-centred Focus on the whole child Nuanced understanding of child development stages Inclusive culture Diverse learning opportunities - especially learning from Aboriginal elders and teachers Festivals Music and song The community.

I believe in it's Mission statement and values. Plus my child is absolutely ecstatic to attend school every day.

I find it is a wholistic education. For the most part, children learn deeply and are treated with respect. The community is lovely.

Steiner Curriculum, excellent student/ staff and teacher ratio, outstanding teachers, warm and welcoming community, academic rigour, performance opportunities and excellent specialist programs. Leadership has immense integrity and commitment.

We loved that it caters to the whole child, with a focus on life skills and learning through experiences. Our children are drawn to the arts so we also love the focus on this. They also love being outdoors and we love the outdoor opportunities and the bush block.

Happy with the nurturing of learning

Because my children are safe and are encouraged to develop skills I think will serve them well, as they step into an uncertain future.

Because my child is happy in Milkwood. I like the values and vision of Milkwood.

Outdoor learning and not being sat at a desk for most of the day.

It is a Steiner school, the values of the school and the curriculum align to our family values. The school has a strong emphasis on indigenous education and anti oppressive practice. I believe this school contributes to nurturing good people and provides our family with an experience and a community we couldn't get elsewhere.

I trust that Milkwood will allow my children to each flourish in their own way as they are on their learning journeys. I can see how the school has shaped them -- how they are in the world and with others, and the values that they adopt. I am so grateful for the School, and it is one of the main things that is keeping our family in Darwin, as I think it is the best Steiner school in Australia, and an amazing school in general, and I trust the welfare of my children here.

It is a whole family decision that works for us all

Its more aligned with our lifestyle

Like the way the children are being taught and learn, welcoming safe, friendly environment x

I believe in the Steiner Curriculum. It is now so well adapted to place at Milkwood

Holistic approach to development, celebration and reverence towards the environment. Attention to beauty and love for fellow humans and all living beings. Celebration of many cultural histories.

My kids are happy

Car parking in the morning is not as good as it could be (my son is in the kindergarten so need to park the car every morning and afternoon to drop him off and pick him up, which is a pain particularly when younger siblings are in tow). It appears that teachers park their cars wherever they choose, often right in front of the school (based on the number of cars still there by mid morning). It would be preferable if the nearby car parks were reserved for parents doing drop-offs/pick-ups, and if the teachers parked a bit further away. I understand this sounds like I'm asking for preferential treatment for parents over teachers, but it makes objective sense - a teacher's car only gets walked from/to once every day. A parking spot for a parent's car might get used by five cars every morning and five cars every afternoon - ie 10 car-to-school walks. Also, the parking areas get extremely muddy in the wet season.

The pedagogy makes sense. My child is happy, valued and loved.

Thank you for the work you are doing. Our family really appreciates Milkwood as an option for our children's education.

I am deeply concerned about the functionality of our school board. Board members are often disconnected in their approach to school governance, and this deteriorates the sense of stability in the school.

I would highly recommend Milkwood to anyone who is wanting to give their child a brighter more holistic future.

We think Milkwood's community feels is something to be commended and when we have invited friends to festivals or the bush dance it always something they comment on.

I do not hear from the board, or about school policy development or changes, ever. it would be good to understand (outside of the AGMs) what is happening in this space.

We are very happy with our choice to send our daughter to Milkwood.

New basket balls at school

Milkwood is a wonderful school with wonderful teachers. Our journey has not always been smooth sailing however I have felt extremely well supported by the school (children, parents, teachers and principal). My children receive genuine care and the school has shown investment in all of our children. We are very happy with Milkwood and look forward to many more years.

I would like to thank Netanela for her amazing leadership over the years that she has been Principal. Under her leadership, and with the support of the wonderful staff, the school has been transformed. It is such a gift and a privilege to be part of the school and its community. Thank you to all who work so hard to bring it into reality every day.

Awesome school with great teaching environment.

Netanela's leadership and guardianship of the school is extraordinary. She has guided the school through to a more meaningful, stronger and resilient place for children to grow.

From time to time, it appears to me that people leave the school community with difficulty. It appears as though dignity has not been afforded to all parties. I understand that there are challenges, but I aspire to a community where dignity is valued. I believe that democratic, restorative approaches can be strengthened within the community. And within our school's governing processes. I would like to see conflict management processes, with avenues of appeal and healing strengthened. I would like to find ways we can bring people along, even where there is difference. This is aspirational. I think our community can achieve this.

My children are happy at Milkwood and learning in a variety of ways. The teachers and leadership are approachable and always keen to work together to find solutions to any issues my children may have. We love the seasonal festivals, the incredible music program which is embedded in everyday school life. Our children have made firm friendships, have space to be themselves and are curious, confident learners.

We are in love with Milkwood. we'd love for all families to love it as much as us by adhering to rules such as no screen time and no tv/videogame related play and clothing brought to school.

Overall, we are very happy with Milkwood [...] Some areas of concern include behaviour management. There are a lot of kids that require a lot of behaviour management attention which detracts from the experience of the kids who are doing/trying to do the right thing. I appreciate this is going to happen anywhere though. In the Bush Apple class it is hard on the kids, particularly the end of the week part time group to have a different combination of teaching staff each day. It would be really helpful for the primary teacher to receive the children each of the 5 mornings then have release time after the children are settled. Some teachers communicate really well on a regular basis with parents and others don't, regular and prompt communication of weekly updates as well as any issues feels really important for us. I also feel like meeting children's individual learning needs could be better communicated between parents and teachers.

My child has grown and thrived being at milkwood

Our children all enjoy being at Milkwood and all feel safe at Milkwood. [...] Diversity, indigenous culture sharing and festivals are all excellent. Milkwood acts with the best interests of children at heart. We are particularly impressed with the Principal and really appreciate her approach with our children. Behaviour could sometimes be better managed. The classrooms are often pretty rowdy which impacts our children's enjoyment of being in class (also acknowledging that they could very well be a part of the rowdiness at times).

My child has really enjoyed being at Milkwood. I feel they are well supported here and that the community is wonderfully embracing and considerate. I am glad they have a chance to undertake their learning at Milkwood, and I hope that we will be able to be here for some years to come.

My child loves the school and going for bush walks. He always comes home singing beautiful songs and talks about his experiences at school every day. He has made so many friends and has built great bonds with everyone.

We have found milkwood to be warm & welcoming - a unique & genuine experience thus far

Is enjoying the smaller class and additional support in the class room. More information and guidance on the do's and don'ts for class mates with intolerances would be really useful i.e. milk allergy - does that include cooked dairy or not

Our first year as a Milkwood family has been great, we are very happy about our decision to send our daughter there.

My child loves Milkwood and is always excited to attend.

My children love being at Milkwood.

My child love and enjoys milkwood. The main concern is retention of quality staff

My child looks forward to going to school each and every day. They are excited for the day and to see their teachers and friends.

My child enjoys attending Milkwood and has always felt well cared for. He has healthy relationships with all teachers and staff and feels comfortable and ready to learn.

My child is below academically and although I do feel like they are getting support for this I am concerned the number of students with disruptive behaviours takes a lot of this support away.

[My child] enjoys being at Milkwood and we enjoy the daily routines. [My child] has been hurt from behaviours of other students but I feel [their teacher] has always responded quickly and appropriately.

I am thinking about the start of the year and I think an orientation session would have been good for new families before the first day. The first day was a bit chaotic and we didn't know where to go etc.

The teachers are wonderful. I firmly believe that my children are safe and happy and are being taught to think in ways that will benefit their future and the world's future. I sometimes think that the focus has become too much on decolonising the curriculum and not enough on steiner principles which detracts from the school. I have deep concerns about some of the student behaviour, in particular the double standards that seems to occur with some students being allowed to swear, threaten and intimidate, and systematically disrupt classes without consequence, while others are held to much higher standards. This does not seem to make sense to me. I also do not understand why some classes are taking on children with additional needs without the support to ensure they are able to integrate into the class fully. This has led to disappointment for all involved, not least, the class children.

Loves her experience at Milkwood. She is very, very happy.

Milkwood has been very supportive and inclusive with all children. I cannot think in enrolling my child in another school.

We are only new to Milkwood

All of my children have been welcomed and have a sense of belonging since being at Milkwood. I am impressed with the swift action to support us when required and that communication is exceptional.

My children love Milkwood. They are each different, but Milkwood brings out the best in all of them. Their favourite things are different -- class pets, interesting and exciting learning opportunities, strong connection to First Nations culture, and a strongly supportive social environment.

We are grateful to have tech free spaces for our children's learning.

I would like to see more guidance for students on how to be kind to others, how to include them when new and help with social situations.

The children love and enjoy going to school which reflects how the school teaches and operates overall.

My child is an enthusiastic learner at Milkwood.

My children are happy and strong in their learning and holistic wellbeing.

For combined classes [...] the curriculum seems repetitive and my child felt bored listening to the same stuff over a period of 2 years. Would be great if the curriculum is graded for combined classes to avoid repetitiveness and boredom

More regular parent communication about learning enrichment and relevant children's progress would be helpful. Though I acknowledge we were not able to make it to the information session so many have missed important information there.

We have two children in particular who would benefit from learning enrichment help, one at each end of that spectrum. We're still a little unsure of what support or extension they are receiving and are also unsure if the challenges and areas that need extension are being properly acknowledged. Overall, happy with the school. Very keen to hear who will be teaching what classes next year. Happy to be contacted for further constructive comment.

Milkwood's specialist programs are great and only inhibited by the limit space of the grounds.

Overall lovely

All specialist programs are highly complementary to the class teaching of the Steiner Curriculum. I am very impressed by the intensive development of these programs over recent years, they make Milkwood school life and learning rich and dynamic!

My children have particular fondness for any learning with Thisbe, Indigenous knowledge, Indonesian and festivals

I can see how Milkwood's specialist programs have deeply enriched my children's development. It is not just the skills that they have developed, but also how the content and approach has shaped their way of being in the world.

My child would love more interschool sport opportunities.

I dislike the library, I feel some of the books are inappropriate topics that I either disagree with or believe that is not for the school to teach. I counter this by making sure my child knows our family values and why we use logical reasoning when listening to others opinions. I love the look of the library but dislike that you can not get many books out and the books are very tattered

Overall good.

The influence of media is noticeable in Milkwood children, even in the younger years. While we have our own rules in place at home while our children are still young, I do have concerns about this as our children grow and are subjected to peer pressure around participating in gaming etc.

Our family feels very aligned with the mission and values of Milkwood and are happy to be supporting the school. It sometimes feels like the day to day classroom dynamics in some classrooms don't always reflect the greater values of the school and I wonder, if for some teachers in particular, there needs to be closer mentoring and guidance to make sure the values are being kept in front of mind.

It is awesome for kids to just be kids and have an imagination. Also to have great learning experiences in different aspects not just maths and English. I wish I had gone to a school like this when I was growing up.

These [values] are authentic and present in day to day learning.

Lack of visible support for LGBTQIA+ community at the school is concerning – especially given the poor mental health outcomes for queer young people. I would like to see more vocal support in the school and a commitment to standing with the LGBTQIA community. I would like to see more visible conversations, not with not just our children, but also parents and the wider community.

I feel and see Milkwood Leadership, Staff and Teachers continually reflecting on the Mission and Values of the school in all aspects of curriculum and planning. I see Leadership, teachers and staff engaged with the school values embedding these into all the work they do. I see the Milkwood community responding to the values of the school when contributing to Milkwood for school festivals, events and groups. I believe that as part of the Milkwood community the intention of the mission and values are visible daily, in personal interactions, the school newsletter, website, all email communications, via teacher meetings and in face-to-face communications.

As stated previously, I think the curriculum has become too focused on decolonisation, and somewhat strayed from the Steiner principles.

to many teachers are leaving – its not right and staff are not supported

The Principal and teachers strongly model Milkwood values. Children are at the heart of the school, and their flourishing in ways that respond to the values of the School and to its time and place. The Principal and teachers work very hard to incorporate the values into everything that they do at Milkwood.

We are grateful to be part of a local and global community with strong values.

I am keen to engage with more adult education and contribute more as I can in the future. It's really awesome to be involved, the kids appreciate it too.



I would like to contribute more but our family is quite young. I hope to do so in future as more of our children are enrolled.

I'm always excited to engage in adult education.

I am glad that the Friends of Milkwood has been formed, and hope that many parents will become involved.

I want to help rally effort to get the school to its forever home.

# 2025 IMPROVEMENT GOALS

1. Embed Restorative Practice into policy and practice for the adults and children of our community.
2. Visible celebration and support for Milkwood's LGBTQIA+ community
3. Improved conditions for educators including pay increase, increased release time, maintaining smaller class sizes, release time for Teacher Assistants and more - to support professional fulfilment and staff retention.
4. Increased Adult Education on the role of Anti-Oppression in Steiner Education
5. Operational adjustments to reduce teacher release time happening in the first lesson of the day (drop off time), to support separation.
6. We will buy some new basketballs.
7. Governance and communication training for the Board.
8. Advocacy to Darwin City Council to improve safety of car parking + footpaths on Boulter Rd.
9. Reduced number of composite classes annually until single streaming can exist in the whole school.
10. Review of communication strategies about educational adjustments to improve and increase parents' access to information about individual student adjustments.
11. More focused adult education on the gifts of inclusive classrooms for all children, to increase the confidence of parents in the school's commitment to inclusion.

