

# PREPARATORY YEAR CURRICULUM OVERVIEW 2011

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# INTRODUCTION

This document provides a brief overview of the curriculum relevant to your child.

Traditionally, the curriculum was viewed as a body of knowledge taught to and learnt by the students. As a result of research into learning this view has changed. We now have more information that has enhanced our understanding of how students learn and we use this in our approach to teaching and learning. Technology has also made us realise that the amount of information is increasing rapidly on a daily basis. In view of this development it would not be possible for anyone to know everything. For this reason, we emphasise the importance of enabling students to acquire the skills and processes of learning. Thinking and problem-solving skills are given a very high priority.

At Westbourne Grammar School, in partnership with teachers, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to be active participants in the learning process. This is in keeping with the School's Vision of being 'the leading learning community in the region'.

We offer a broad, balanced curriculum that is based on the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). This document enables us to use the best curriculum thinking to prepare students for success at school and beyond.

Classroom teachers provide a wide range of stimulating experiences in English, Mathematics, The Humanities (History, Geography & Economics), Science, Technology and Health. Specialist teachers work with children in the areas of Music, Physical Education, LOTE (Japanese), Library and the Visual Arts. Where possible and appropriate, an interdisciplinary approach to learning is pursued. This involves the teaching of a variety of thinking and communication skills which enable students to gain deeper understandings and to achieve greater 'connectedness' in their learning.

Throughout the curriculum, teaching strategies are employed to accommodate students' individual needs, their rates of development and learning styles. In the Preparatory Year, students work towards the Level 1 outcomes from the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Language is the key to learning and a primary method of communication. It plays a vital role in all Key Learning Areas and is central to students' academic, social and emotional development.

The Junior School's English Curriculum aims to encourage students to adopt positive attitudes towards learning English, to develop their ability to use language effectively and to facilitate critical reflection on the way in which language works.

The English Language program provides a focused block of time that is organised to help your child develop in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening. This time is carefully structured to meet the needs of individuals and groups of students. Assessment, both formal and informal, is an ongoing and integral part of the Junior School's Literacy Program.

## **Written Expression**

Students show an emerging awareness of the nature, purposes and conventions of written language.

## **Spelling**

Students learn the names of the letters of the alphabet and the 44 sounds (phonemes) represented by these letters and letter combinations. They begin to use this information to represent words when writing. Students develop a core group of words they can spell accurately.

## **Handwriting**

Students attempt to write upper case and lower case letters appropriately.

## **Grammar**

Students produce texts of one or more sentences, incorporating some grammatical features.

## **Reading**

Students demonstrate a growing understanding of the reading process. This involves integrating a range of skills and strategies such as interpreting familiar written symbols. They begin to develop a sight vocabulary that assists them in their reading and writing. In responding to and discussing texts read aloud by the teacher, they relate what they know about the world and their own experiences and ideas, with events and information in texts. Home reading material is matched to students' needs. The Literacy program will form the foundations of their reading development. Assessment is initially standardised and then it forms an ongoing part of the students' reading development.

## **Speaking and Listening**

Students recognise that there are different kinds of spoken texts. They show an awareness of the purposes and uses of speaking. They use spoken language informally and formally in the classroom setting with peers and adults. With teacher guidance, students identify some basic language features of familiar spoken texts and the need to change tone and language in certain settings. Students are encouraged to interact in group situations and make brief oral presentations. The skill of listening with reasonable attentiveness is also fostered.

# MATHEMATICS

Mathematics pervades all aspects of our lives whether at home, in the workplace or in the wider community. It has applications in many human activities and helps us to solve problems in areas such as science, business and finance, technology, arts and crafts and everyday life. Competence in Mathematics enhances both our understanding of the world and the quality of our participation in society. Consequently, it is essential that all students engage in the study of Mathematics.

Learning Mathematics involves the ability to integrate several components. Students need to know and understand mathematical facts, concepts and terminology. They need to carry out mathematical procedures and it is also vital that students can use Mathematics to investigate and solve problems. At Westbourne, our curriculum ensures that students are given the opportunity to develop in all these areas. The Maths program provides a focussed block of time that incorporates structures to help your child develop in the areas of number, measurement and data, space and reasoning strategies.

## **Number**

Students develop a sense of number up to 20 and beyond through counting, comparing and estimating. They count forwards and backwards by ones and order things within collections. Students develop automatic recall of simple number facts including doubles. They explore, copy and extend simple counting patterns.

Most number work is done in the context of stories and practical situations including the use of money. Simple number stories are solved using materials, drawings, pictures and numerals.

Calculators are used as a support for counting and to assist in dealing with problems involving large numbers.

## **Measurement, Chance and Data**

Students begin to describe objects in terms of attributes. They use everyday language to describe, compare and approximate length, mass, capacity and time in relevant contexts.

Students begin to recognise and discuss elements of chance in familiar situations and events, leading to the idea of levels of chance.

Students collect and classify objects and information. They record and represent information with concrete materials and in picture form. Through discussing these displays they make simple summaries and comparisons involving counting.

## **Space**

Students begin to identify, describe and compare simple two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects which are seen and handled. They combine shapes to draw and build models and they make pictures and patterns.

Students use simple everyday language of location, follow short simple paths and make simple informal models of familiar environments.

## **Working mathematically**

Students use diagrams and materials to investigate mathematical and real life situations. They explore patterns in number and space by manipulating objects according to simple rules (for example, turning letters to make patterns like *bqbbq*, or flipping to make *bdbdbdbd*).

They test simple conjectures such as 'nine is four more than five'. They make rough estimates and check their work with respect to computations and constructions in *Number*, *Space*, and *Measurement, Chance and Data*. They devise and follow ways of recording computations using the digit keys and +, - and = keys on a four function calculator.

They use drawing tools such as simple shape templates and geometry software to draw points, lines, shapes and simple patterns. They copy a picture of a simple composite shape such as a child's sketch of a house.

# INTEGRATED STUDIES

All year levels study Science, The Humanities, Technology and Health within an integrated unit of work. These units are designed to be appropriate to the children's interests and levels of need. They are also linked to the framework of learning outcomes as outlined in the VELs.

The units of work for this year are as follows:

Term One: 'Me and My World'

Term Two: 'I Am a Scientist'

Term Three: 'Welcome to Our Wonderland'

Term Four: 'What's that in your bug catcher?'

## THE HUMANITIES

In the Humanities, Students draw on their own experience to help them understand the world around them. Through activities such as developing personal and family timelines, examining photographs and buildings, and visits from community members, they learn about the concepts of time - chronology and sequencing, and change and continuity.

Students explore how and why natural factors (for example, changes in the weather) and human activities (for example, the closing of a park) affect their lives. They develop basic narratives that link events in their own experience. By participating in activities such as wearing protection from the sun, saving energy, saving water, and recycling, they develop their awareness of environmental issues.

In the Junior School, students undertake a logically sequenced course of study that begins with their immediate environment (family and neighbourhood) and progressively explores the wider communities and world as understandings are developed. Each level of study equips the learner with the skills, knowledge and values to progress to the next focus.

By studying how humans organise themselves into communities, young people develop an understanding of their world and its historical development. The knowledge, skills and values students acquire in this study enable them to participate as confident, responsible and active citizens.

### Prep

At this level the focus is on family and neighbourhood. Students learn about the roles and responsibilities of different family members and the rules and laws in daily life. They also examine the environments in which they function.

## SCIENCE

The study of Science involves the development of knowledge and an understanding of how the world functions. Children have a natural curiosity and inquisitiveness that makes them scientists by nature. At Westbourne Grammar School, we nurture these innate qualities and use them to promote an understanding of ourselves and the universe. We encourage children to develop and use skills which are obtained through observation and experimentation. Emphasis is also placed on the use of appropriate scientific language and methods.

The topics covered in the Integrated Units support the Science curriculum for these year levels.

### Prep

- Students are taught to use appropriate scientific vocabulary to describe and explain their observations and investigations of natural phenomena.
- They are encouraged to raise questions and to discuss their ideas about the natural world through experimentation.
- They are introduced to the scientific ideas underlying the operation of a range of everyday devices involving light, electricity, sound and movement.
- They are encouraged to relate scientific ideas to their own experiences, interests and concerns and to a variety of personal and community uses of science and technology.

## TECHNOLOGY

Technology education gives students the knowledge and skills to produce quality products that solve problems or meet needs. In keeping with technology's widespread application in society, students should use a range of equipment and resources to create products. In the Junior School, technology education is covered across the curriculum.

Technology education aims to develop in students:

- A systematic and creative approach to generating technological solutions.
- The knowledge and skills to use a variety of equipment and resources.
- An understanding of the principles for safely operating equipment.
- The ability to explore and assess the past and potential consequences of using technology.
- A sense of self-confidence and self-sufficiency in dealing with technology.

## HEALTH EDUCATION

Our Health and Pastoral Care Programs encourage children to develop healthy attitudes and to acquire important life skills.

Health Education covers a number of distinct but related subjects. They are Health Education, Personal Safety and Drug Education. Within these related subjects the skills and concepts covered in Health Education are those associated with Food and Nutrition, Health and Hygiene, Health of Individuals and Populations, Self and Relationships.

**Health Education** promotes an understanding of the importance of personal and community actions in promoting health and lifelong participation in physical activity. It also explores the role that supportive physical and social environments play in the development of the health of individuals and communities.

Health Education enables students to:

- Describe what it means to be healthy and how aspects of our environment can promote health.
- Describe self in personal, family and community terms
- Identify the range of people, services and products that help us stay healthy and safe.
- Describe relationships with different people in our daily lives.

**Drug Education** builds on the sense of physical, mental, emotional and social well being as covered in Health Education. People in our society use drugs for both medicinal and recreational reasons. Our school has a responsibility to provide students with the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about the use/non-use of drugs.

Students will gain an understanding that:

- People often feel sick or unwell.
- There are many things we can do to make us feel better or get well.
- Any remedy or drug we use in treating, preventing or alleviating illness is a medicine.
- An emergency is when someone needs urgent help or medical treatment.
- Some emergencies happen as a result of drug misuse. eg. aspirin, cough syrup.
- There are many things I can do, if I or someone is in danger.

**Personal Safety Program** is an empowerment program designed to boost students' confidence in their ability to handle not only problems, but to take control of their lives, and to achieve what they want for themselves. It teaches strategies and skills to ensure the growth of a feeling of safety and empowerment.

**The following personal safety statements underpin the Pastoral Care Program from Prep-Year 6.**

- 1. We all have the right to feel safe and be safe.**
- 2. We can take action on every problem.**
- 3. We can talk about anything with people we trust.**
- 4. We can persist in taking action to improve our safety.**

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The Physical Education program for children in Prep aims to expose students to a variety of movement experiences. It is concerned with the development of attitudes, values, knowledge and human movement skills related to health, fitness, recreation and quality of life for self and others.

In our Physical Education program we aim to develop positive attitudes that will lead students towards achieving an active and healthy lifestyle. Our well balanced and comprehensive Physical Education program contributes to students becoming confident, independent, disciplined, healthy, happy and fit.

As proposed in the School curriculum, the units of work covered in Prep include:

- Dance
- Minor games
- Fundamental motor skills
- Fitness
- Spatial awareness
- Ball handling
- Swimming
- Gymnastics

Through trying, experiencing, sharing and enjoying, all children have the opportunity to experience success.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

In the Junior School the application of computers plays a vital role in the learning process of all students. Rather than being a subject in itself, computer technology is used as a tool to enhance learning experiences across all areas of the curriculum. The acquisition of computer skills by students is accelerating rapidly. Expectations in this regard are constantly being reappraised.

### **Prep**

At this level, students become familiar with the following:

- How to use a mouse
- Keyboard and letter familiarisation
- How to use the computer for research
- Use of the internet for email
- Familiarisation with the Internet
- Identifying the key components of a computer and indicating some purposes for using this technology in the home and at school.
- Developing simple information products using a limited range of information technology skills, processes and equipment

# VISUAL ARTS

Students are given the opportunity to explore, create and communicate through a range of materials and hands-on experiences. The children are immersed in a stimulating environment that motivates, directs, inspires and encourages each child so that he/she is nurtured to reach his/her full potential. All children are valued as an individual and their artwork is appreciated in its own right.

## **Prep**

At this level, students will be given the opportunity to:

- Use basic elements in the exploration of visual art work.
- Share visual artwork.
- Draw upon play and imagination in making visual art work.
- Respond to visual art works in a personal way.
- Show awareness of visual art in everyday life.
- Use a range of materials and equipment.
- Begin to handle simple tools correctly, e.g. scissors, glue.
- Discriminate between simple materials according to their qualities e.g. rough, smooth, hard, soft.

# MUSIC

At Westbourne the Music program is based on the Kodaly methodology and Orff Schulwerk approach. These encourage children to develop a good understanding of beat, rhythm and pitch.

## **Prep**

At the Prep level, students are encouraged to do the following:

- Distinguish between high and low and associate these pitches with pictorial representation.
- Sing a known song aloud and upon a given cue sing in their head to develop inner hearing
- Imitate and explore upward/downward.
- Demonstrate a sense of steady beat in speech rhymes, songs and instrumental music in both simple and compound metres.
- Distinguish between long and short sounds, and sound and silence.
- Improvise new words to melodic motifs from known songs.
- Distinguish between fast and slow, becoming faster or slower, loud and soft, and becoming louder or softer.
- Distinguish between the four voice functions: speaking, singing, whispering and calling.
- Recognise other students' voices.
- Imitate and explore environmental sounds vocally.
- Listen to and match percussion sounds with instruments.
- Experience same/different parts of musical pieces and introductions to musical pieces.

# JAPANESE

Students develop the ability to establish and maintain communication around topics which are relevant to their experiences in both the classroom setting and through contact with Japanese nationals.

Through their participation in the program, students:

- enhance their communication skills
- they are immersed in socio-cultural activities
- they learn how to learn a language
- they improve their general knowledge
- they develop greater language and cultural awareness.

## **Interpersonal Use of the Language**

- Make a simple statement.
- Use simple social formulae for greetings in appropriate situations.

## **Informational Use of the Language**

- Understand and respond appropriately to simple spoken instructions.
- Trace and copy short sentences.

## **Aesthetic Use of the Language**

- Listen to a Japanese children's story for an understanding of specific words and phrases.
- Create a big book by adding words to appropriate illustrations.

## **Script**

- Understand how Hiragana is used.

## **Socio-cultural**

- Throughout the study of each unit of work students will develop knowledge and an understanding of the socio-cultural aspects of the Japanese language and culture.

# LIBRARY

The Library plays a vital role in the life of our school. It is most important that all children have access to high quality Library resources that reflect the varying ages and needs of the students.

Children are exposed to a wide variety of literature. It is hoped that they will develop a love of literature and will come to view reading as a worthwhile leisure activity.

The effective teaching of information skills is considered important both to provide access to information and to enable students to use information for purposeful inquiry, informed decision making and learning throughout life.

Through the sequential teaching of Library skills, all children are able to adequately access a wide range of Library materials by the end of their primary schooling.

## **Prep**

At this level, students are encouraged to do the following:

- Develop and maintain a love of reading.
- Identify parts of a book - front, back, spine, pages.
- Recognise the words - author, title, librarian.
- Take care of books - clean hands, turning pages, use of library bag.
- Understand how to borrow a book.
- Locate the picture story books and reshelve one.
- Share books with others.

## OUTDOOR EDUCATION

At Westbourne, we have a strong Outdoor Education program that begins at the Prep level and continues through to Year 12. The program involves children learning and living successfully in various environments. It encourages children to develop life skills and cooperative skills in coping with an 'outdoor' classroom.

The Prep Camp is in fact a lengthened school day. Students wear suitable casual clothes and are involved in outdoor activities which heighten their awareness of their surroundings. They enjoy camping activities which may include putting up a tent, eating toasted marshmallows and singing around a camp fire.

You will receive further information about camp as the date draws closer.

## INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

All students have particular learning requirements and need to be nurtured to ensure their potential is fully developed. Within the range of students' abilities, there are different levels of need that require different types of educational provision. At Westbourne, we use a co-ordinated range of approaches to student learning that we believe provide all students with a fulfilling and challenging education commensurate with their abilities. Some of the strategies we use are outlined below.

### **Monitoring Learning**

All classroom teachers conduct assessment on a regular basis. In our school we are also fortunate to have a School Counsellor, Educational Psychologist, an Educational Support Coordinator and a Director of Curriculum Development who can assist classroom teachers in assessing student needs.

### **Classroom Programs**

Our curriculum planning is organised to provide students with experiences that will cater for different learning styles and levels of thinking. Our use of integrated units allows learning to occur across broad themes and provides many opportunities for independent research. In fact, independent study is greatly encouraged and students are given opportunities to develop individual projects of interest related to the school's curriculum.

### **Learning Centres**

The Literacy Program in Years Prep to Year 4, is specifically organised to cater for different ability levels in reading and writing. We have staff who are well trained in facilitating this program.

### **Excursions/Incursions**

Students have the opportunity to gain greater information on a unit of work by visiting and observing a particular location outside the school environment, or conversely, having a group or individual visit them. They are able to talk to experts who are not always readily available in the classroom. For some students, these experts may serve as models or even mentors.

### **Cross-Age Tutoring and Buddy System**

In the organisation of our buddy system, younger students are matched to older students with whom they can share their interests, skills and talents.

### **Junior Enrichment & Extension Program**

JEEP provides students with the opportunity to develop their problem solving and higher order thinking skills through a variety of educational experiences. The program involves students working collaboratively on a relevant issue, extending and challenging their current knowledge and understandings through discussion, research and analysis.