



# ST THOMAS' SCHOOL TERANG

## CURRICULUM



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# CURRICULUM

**AT ST. THOMAS' WE PRESENT A DIVERSE, INTERESTING AND COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED ON THE VICTORIAN CURRICULUM AND FRAMED WITHIN THE PRINCIPLES OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLC). THESE PRINCIPLES ARE;**

- 1. Student learning focus:** School improvement starts with an unwavering focus on student learning.
- 2. Collective responsibility:** For every child to achieve, every adult must take responsibility for every child's learning.
- 3. Instructional leadership:** Effective school leaders focus on teaching and learning.
- 4. Collective efficacy:** Teachers make better instructional decisions together.
- 5. Adult learning:** Teachers learn best with others, on the job.
- 6. Privileged time:** Effective schools provide time and forums for teacher conversations about student learning.
- 7. Continuous improvement:** Effective teams improve through recurring cycles of diagnosing student learning needs, and planning, implementing and evaluating teaching responses to them.
- 8. Evidence driven:** Effective professional learning and practice is evidence based and data driven.
- 9. System focus:** The most effective school leaders contribute to the success of other schools.
- 10. Integrated regional support:** Schools in improving systems are supported by teams of experts who know the communities they work in.

It is recognised that parent/teacher expectations influence children's performance. Teachers at St. Thomas' School have extremely high and well-founded expectations of all children so that a positive attitude toward learning is created within each child. It is our intention to challenge each child to achieve his/her fullest potential in each area of the curriculum. All subjects/domains are taught using an Inquiry approach, which challenges children to engage in their interest, take risks and enhance their knowledge.

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As Christian educators at St. Thomas' we belong to a faith Community, and share the responsibility of communicating the message of Christ to the children under our care. While formal Religious Education is based on the guidelines set out by the Catholic Education Office, we believe that our Faith permeates all aspects of our school life. As Christian People we share values, beliefs and a personal commitment to Christ. In union with you, we at St. Thomas' nurture your child's faith encouraging them to move towards making a mature faith commitment. The basis of our Religious Education Program is the Awakenings Program supported by Scripture centred materials based on Sunday gospel readings.

An integral part of our Religious Education is the celebration of School Masses and Liturgies. The children help to plan and take part in these celebrations and we welcome parents to join us at these times. As part of Jesus' call, we actively engage in social justice programs founded on the Catholic Social Teaching Principles, which are;

**Dignity of the human person:** Every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore has inherent dignity. No human being should have their dignity or freedom compromised.

**The common good:** Every person should have sufficient access to the goods and resources of society so that they can completely and easily live fulfilling lives.

**Subsidiarity and participation:** All people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Subsidiarity requires that decisions are made by the people closest and most affected by the issues and concerns of the community.

**Solidarity:** Everyone belongs to one human family, regardless of their national, religious, ethnic, economic, political and ideological differences.

**Preferential option for the poor:** Caring for the poor is everyone's responsibility. Preferential care should be shown to poor and vulnerable people, whose needs and rights are given special attention.

**Economic justice:** Economic life is not meant solely for profit, but rather in service of the entire human community.

**Stewardship of Creation:** We must all respect, care for and share the resources of the earth, which are vital for the common good of people.

**Promotion of peace:** All Peace requires respect for and the development of human life, which in turn involves the safeguarding of the goods, dignity and freedom of people.

# LITERACY

The English program is based around four components – reading, writing, listening and speaking, and is developed through an inquiry and experience-based approach.

By building upon and extending the children's interests, they develop an aptitude for learning and acquire the appropriate skills they need to become literate and articulate people.

With the increased focus on Literacy, all classes participate in a 2 hour daily Literacy block with Reading, Spelling, Writing, Speaking and Listening activities. Learning experiences are modelled, purposeful and creative. They take place in an environment where children are actively involved in their own learning.

Our approach strives to, where possible, integrate all areas of the curriculum to give the greatest possible meaning to English. Small groups of focused teaching operate within the literacy block and across all levels to cater for the specific needs of individual children.

All children participate in a program of literacy assessment at the beginning and end of each year.

All teachers regularly monitor and assess their students and modify their classroom programs to ensure that each student is taught at their specific point of need.



## READING

The reading program is designed to equip the children with the many complex reading skills they require, while at the same time assisting them to develop a love of reading and an appreciation of good literature. Our reading program incorporates a wide range of different reading books at all grade levels. A variety of supplementary books as well as the children's personal choices from the library are used for enrichment and home reading.

## WRITING

Writing, as part of the English program, is aimed at enabling children to give expression of their thoughts and experiences in a free and imaginative manner, while at the same time providing them with the skills of correct grammar, punctuation, spelling and word usage. Children are encouraged to discuss and evaluate their own work so that their ability to think clearly and express these thoughts in written languages is developed. By leading the child through the writing process stages: pre-writing, draft writing, revising, editing and publishing, he or she comes to appreciate the value of good writing and experiences the satisfaction of publishing his or her own work.

## SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Speaking and Listening refers to the various formal and informal ways oral language is used to convey and receive meaning. It involves the development and demonstration of knowledge about the appropriate oral language for particular audiences and occasions, including body language and voice. It also involves the development of active-listening strategies and an understanding of the conventions of different spoken texts including everyday communication, group discussion, formal presentations and speeches, storytelling and negotiating.

## HANDWRITING

The handwriting style adopted at St. Thomas' School is called Victorian Modern Cursive. This style is referred to as a 'foundation style' because it will provide for further development and personalisation throughout schooling.

1. This handwriting is based on an oval shape, not a circle.
2. Many letters have a wedge as part of their shape.
3. Many letters have exits.
4. Some letters have entries. Entries and exits make it easier to do joined writing later on.
5. The downstrokes are usually more important than the upstrokes.
6. The writing has a slight slope because most people find it easier that way.

## SACRAMENTAL EDUCATION

During their primary school years, children of the Catholic Faith are initiated into the Church through the Sacraments of Confirmation (Gr. 2) and Eucharist (Gr. 3). They also receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Gr. 2 & Gr. 6). The Sacramental Programs are Family Based and are co-ordinated by the Parish Sacramental Team. They involve home and community preparation and are complemented by the school Religious Education Program.

# NUMERACY

The Mathematics curriculum at St. Thomas' relates maths to the familiar, everyday environment. The program's structure is flexible and sequential, providing the children with easily managed development steps and allowing them to experience continued success. Aims for essential learning in school mathematics are for students to:

- demonstrate useful mathematical and numeracy skills for successful general employment and functioning in society
- solve practical problems with mathematics, especially industry and work-based problems
- develop specialist knowledge in mathematics that provides for further study in the discipline
- see mathematical connections and be able to apply mathematical concepts, skills and processes in posing and solving mathematical problems
- be confident in one's personal knowledge of mathematics, to feel able both to apply it, and to acquire new knowledge and skills when needed
- be empowered through knowledge of mathematics as a numerate citizen, able to apply this knowledge critically in societal and political contexts
- develop an understanding of the role of mathematics in life, society and work; the role of mathematics in history; and mathematics as a discipline – its big ideas, history, aesthetics and philosophy.

The Maths curriculum is concerned with relating maths to the familiar, everyday environment through exploration of space and measurement, number, chance & data, structure and working mathematically.

Prior to the commencement of the School Year students complete the Numeracy Interview with their teacher, to identify individual growth points, their results assisting teachers to plan a program according to class needs.

The program is structured and sequential, providing the children with easily managed developmental steps that allow them to experience continued success.

# DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

The School has computers, tablets and ipads in each classroom and in a laboratory which are networked. These are used extensively by the children for acquiring skills and knowledge in accessing, sending and utilizing information as well as the publishing of their own work, the creative presentation of projects and for developing problem solving skills.

Digital Technology classes focus on students building coding and programming skills. In a technological world that is rapidly changing technological literacy is yet another key to your child's future that we aim for at St. Thomas'.



# INQUIRY BASED LEARNING

The inquiry approach to learning is based on the belief that students are powerful learners who must be actively engaged in the process of investigating, processing, organising, synthesising, refining and extending their knowledge within a topic. In a nutshell, the inquiry process involves:

- planned, direct and rich experiences that provide opportunities for
- students to pose questions and gather information.
- activities that help students organise new information and use skills in a way that assists them to form concepts and generalizations about their world
- opportunities for students to work independently and cooperatively and demonstrate what they have learnt
- applying the knowledge, skills and values to other contexts.

The inquiry process has the potential to develop skills and dispositions for lifelong learning, for example, independence, thinking skills, confidence, decision making, cooperative learning and other life skills. We can integrate different subject areas, information technology and global issues.

# INDEPENDENT AND INTERDEPENDENT LEARNING

Staff have travelled overseas to experience first hand, through observation, experience and dialogue, how self directed learning schools operate. It has been proven in educational research that when we provide students with the opportunity to work independently and interdependently successful learning occurs and children are equipped in becoming self managing and self monitoring 'life long' learners. As a school we are providing opportunities for our children to manage and assess themselves as learners as they work independently and interdependently. This involves goal setting and goal reviewing at the end of each term with your child's classroom teacher.

As a school that uses the 'Inquiry' based approach, we are already providing a vehicle for our students to work independently and interdependently. This approach assists students to work independently and cooperatively on investigations through reflection and action, and managing themselves as learners.

These opportunities have improved student learning outcomes at our school and enabled our teachers to develop innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

# HABITS OF MIND

Staff have completed extensive professional development on the benefits of integrating Habits of Mind into their teaching and learning practices in the classroom to inspire great thinking and problem solving in our learners. These habits are the tools of disciplined choice making and provide our students with a vehicle towards successful lifelong learning.

The 16 Habits of Mind include:

- Persisting
- Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision
- Managing impulsivity
- Gathering data through all senses
- Listening with understanding and empathy
- Creating, imagining, innovating
- Thinking flexibly
- Responding with wonderment and awe
- Thinking about thinking (metacognition)
- Taking responsible risks
- Striving for accuracy
- Finding humour
- Questioning and posing problems
- Thinking interdependently
- Applying past knowledge to new situations
- Remaining open to continuous learning

By implementing these Habits of Mind into our school culture we are building the citizenship skills, knowledge, capabilities and values that equip our students as independent thinkers for the 21st century.

# HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The Health and Physical Education program is a comprehensive whole School Program and covers areas such as fitness, movement exploration, game skills and water activities. It provides students with knowledge, skills and behaviours to enable them to achieve a degree of autonomy in developing and maintaining their physical, mental, social and emotional health. The Health and Physical Education program focuses on the importance of a healthy lifestyle and physical activity in the lives of individuals and groups in our society.

The Health and Physical Education Program includes our annual Swimming Carnival, Cross Country Carnival and Athletics Carnival which are wonderful community events.

# PERCEPTUAL MOTOR PROGRAM

Each week our Prep students take part in P.M.P. (Perceptual Motor Program). This program aims to train the nervous system so that a child develops the ability to remember patterns of movement, sequences of sounds and the look and feel of things. When movement tasks are fully integrated, children are able to perform them automatically, allowing freedom to do more than one task at a time. In addition, social and behavioural challenges are presented, words are introduced and reinforced, and behaviours such as waiting in line, taking turns and applauding the efforts of others are encouraged.

# INDONESIAN – LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH (L.O.T.E)

St. Thomas' offers Indonesian as its LOTE subject. Children are provided with the opportunity to develop basic language skills as well as an appreciation of the culture of Indonesia our closest neighbour. Indonesian is taught P – 6.



# THE ARTS

Opportunities for the children to participate in the three areas of The Arts (Music, Performing Arts, Visual Arts) are embraced and celebrated at St. Thomas'.

## VISUAL ARTS

At St. Thomas' we recognise the important role of the Visual Arts in the development of the whole child, and the opportunity it provides for self expression. We encourage and guide our students to develop their creativity, nurture their imagination and learn new skills.

Our students are fortunate to have weekly lessons in our well resourced art room, which is a creative hub in the school. These art lessons complement the enquiry units of work devised by the classroom teachers, linking in with what the children are learning about in their classrooms.

Bi-annually we have a Whole School Arts focus with the children learning about different periods of art history and different artists and their styles.

Our art room is open at lunchtime once a week for children who may like to participate in extra art activities.

The children also have opportunities to participate in competitions, exhibitions and work with visiting artists.

## PERFORMING ARTS

Many opportunities are provided for the students at St. Thomas' to showcase their performing arts skills!

At our weekly assemblies classes take it in turns to present their learning to our school community. Songs, plays, speeches and movies all regularly feature during these presentations.

Our school also participates in the Warrnambool Eisteddfod each year. Children are involved in Choral Speaking, Recitals, Poetry Performances, Narrative Reading, Story Telling, Scripture Reading and Debating.

## MUSIC

The children are guided through an extensive music program. The music program gives children the opportunity to explore a wide range of musical experiences. Children are directed in the appropriate techniques and in appreciation of music in society.

Students are given numerous opportunities to share their music appreciation with others through concerts and performances. St Thomas' also has a school choir which meet once a week. The choir are often called upon to sing at official functions such as masses and community events.

# LIBRARY

Our Library is a central point in the school. The Library is fully automated using bookmark as its operating system. Children are encouraged to borrow both fiction and non-fiction books for personal use and enjoyment. Young children may not necessarily be able to read some of these books (graded classroom books cater for this) but parents or older family members can read these library books to the children helping them to create a love of books and reading. Books must be taken to and from school in a strong bag to ensure the long life of our extensive collection.

Part of the Library service is a Book Club provided through Ashton Scholastic. Children may order books via a brochure sent home twice per term. Orders are placed in the office. If paying by cheque, please make the cheque payable to Scholastic Australia. By participating in the book club, children can purchase good books cheaply and so build up a library at home. The school receives a variety of resources as a result of our participation in Book Club.

# ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

The children are assessed continually throughout the year. Parent/Teacher interviews are held early second term, are compulsory and provide an opportunity for teachers and parents to discuss the year ahead, as well as any concerns and possible strategies. Parents may wish to meet with teachers at other times and this is encouraged. In these circumstances, a mutually suitable time is arranged through the School Office. Parents are advised that teachers cannot conduct an interview at the classroom door, particularly while class is in process. If your child is experiencing difficulties that the staff feel need addressing, we will contact you so that positive action can take place.

Reports are issued twice yearly, at the conclusion of Terms 2 and 4. They are written with the understanding that each child is an individual unique in gift, character, personality and ability. They are intended to give an overall picture of your child's progress. Learning Portfolios will showcase your child's work against curriculum outcomes and are sent home at the end of each term.

The beginning of the year is the opportunity for teachers/parents contact, and information is communicated to parents.

# INTERVENTION PROGRAM

The Intervention Program has the primary objective to assist children with potential interest or learning difficulties. Children are assessed and an appropriate learning program is organised.

Support advisors at Catholic Education Office are also available to assist.

Parental involvement is an integral part of this program, monitored by our Wellbeing Leader.

# EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Students are able to participate in the following activities and are strongly encouraged to do so.

## PASTORAL

- Visits to Mountview & May Noonan
- Visits to Kindergarten
- Mission support

## ARTS

- Choir
- Drama/Dance
- Musical
- Eisteddfod
- Debating & Public Speaking

## SPORTING

- Hooptime Basketball
- Athletics
- Cross Country
- Swimming
- Football / Netball / Soccer





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