

Curriculum Philosophy

Our unitised vertical curriculum is based on the following beliefs about students and learning and teaching. These beliefs were developed and made coherent through the process we used to plan and implement our curriculum organisation and our complementary school structures involving the timetable and the support services.

We believe that:

- we all learn at different rates. Slower students are allowed more time at a particular level, while others are allowed to accelerate. Maths and English have "catch up" units.
- given enough time, all students can master the basic skills, with the possible exception of those students ascertained as having severe learning disabilities. For them, there may be a different set of basic skills. Units have been devised so that students can work at the same level until they achieve mastery of that level, without repeating the content of any particular unit.
- literacy and numeracy are basic to learning, and we value them highly. Special classes are created for students with problems in literacy and numeracy, and we allocate extra resources from our Special Needs Support Group to support those classes.
- individual students have special skills and abilities and come with varied prior learnings. Students may undergo auditions (Music, Drama) and tests (Maths, English) to establish an appropriate entry point. These different entry points are especially significant for Languages Other Than English.
- when students are challenged with tasks at a level appropriate to their skill development, they are more motivated and learn better. In some subjects, eg Maths and English, certain skills must be mastered before moving into a more difficult unit.
- students learn best when there is a warm, supportive learning environment. Students with learning difficulties or an impairment, eg hearing, are supported in the classroom.
- students learn best when they are challenged at an appropriate level. This is implemented through our vertical timetable and our system of subject advice.
- performance level and readiness are better criteria for grouping students into classes than is age level. Class groupings are based on readiness and performance level rather than age. There is no system of marking time in first year, and effective work groups are established on entry to the school.
- feedback is necessary for planning and decision making. A system of subject advice, which happens two-thirds of the way through each semester, has been developed which involves direct reporting to parents and students.
- parents and students should be actively involved in the planning and decision making in relation to the child's education. All prospective students and their parents are interviewed in Year 7 to plan a course of study through the

Middle Phase of Learning.

- when students are encouraged to be realistic about their achievements, they set attainable goals and experience success. The subject advice process and the selection of units each semester compels students to evaluate their own performances and reflect on their stage of development.
- with a flexible timetable, students will be able to study some units for pleasure and interest in addition to studying those subjects directly connected with career plans. There is time built into the timetable for students to try a unit of a subject that interests them, for example computing.
- a timetable that embodies the principles of social justice and inclusive curriculum will provide opportunities for students to catch up on their basic skills. A vertical timetable is provided, with resources allocated to support students who need help with literacy.
- a curriculum based on sound educational theory will reinforce student learning across all subjects. Curriculum delivery is based on a constructivist philosophy, and unit work programs are focussed on essential learnings.
- a curriculum that supports an active and informed citizenship should provide students with information and opportunities to become independent learners. There are some compulsory units to be studied by all students. One relates to Citizenship. Students in their Senior Phase of Learning start and finish early on two or three days of each week and use this time responsibly.
- there are certain essential skills and abilities that students must develop if they are to be successful as independent learners. Work programs have, as one of the focus points, the set of essential learnings that have been identified by our school community.
- students learn best when they are engaged in meaningful tasks. Our system of subject advice places students in appropriate classes, increasing their chances of success.
- Details about the units and subjects that we offer for our students can be obtained in the Junior and Senior Subject handbooks available from the school office.