



Diversity Opens Minds

# CHART YOUR COURSE

A GUIDE TO ST MICHAEL'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS



# WELCOME

ST MICHAEL'S IS A CREATIVE AND CARING SCHOOL, WHICH STRIVES FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND CELEBRATES THE DIVERSITY OF ITS COMMUNITY. WE AIM TO SET THE BENCHMARK AMONG INNOVATIVE, CO-EDUCATIONAL SCHOOLS IN AUSTRALIA.

Our extensive academic, co-curricular and pastoral care programs empower students to chart their preferred educational paths, explore their own individual interests and immerse themselves in rich learning experiences.


Our progressive culture reflects the spirit of our founders, the Community of the Sisters of the Church. The Sisters established St Michael's in 1895, on the same site where our school continues to thrive. Their visionary principles and values of diversity, individuality and creativity survive as an enduring legacy to current and future generations. Their spirit of innovation in learning resonates profoundly within the St Michael's community today.

While the School draws and learns from its past, our focus is very much on educating for the future. We strive to challenge young minds and equip our students with the skills, knowledge and confidence necessary to engage with life as contributing citizens of the 21st century.

We believe in educating students to communicate and negotiate, to think critically, and to live with dignity, respect, care and compassion. Our values provide the foundation for everything we do. It is our commitment to living these values that sets St Michael's apart.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Gipson'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Simon Gipson  
Head of the School



St Michael's attracts students from all areas of Melbourne and all regions of the world. Our community mirrors that of St Kilda, the suburb in which we are situated. Cosmopolitan and inclusive, the St Michael's community comprises students, teachers, parents, Old Michaelians, friends and supporters, all united by commitment to the following values:

*Diversity* celebrating and embracing difference

*Creativity* fostering new thinking and expression

*Individuality* valuing strengths and encouraging independent thinking

*Dignity and respect* conducting oneself in an authentic manner, while respecting one's self, others and the environment

*Care and compassion* actively seeking to contribute to another's happiness and wellbeing

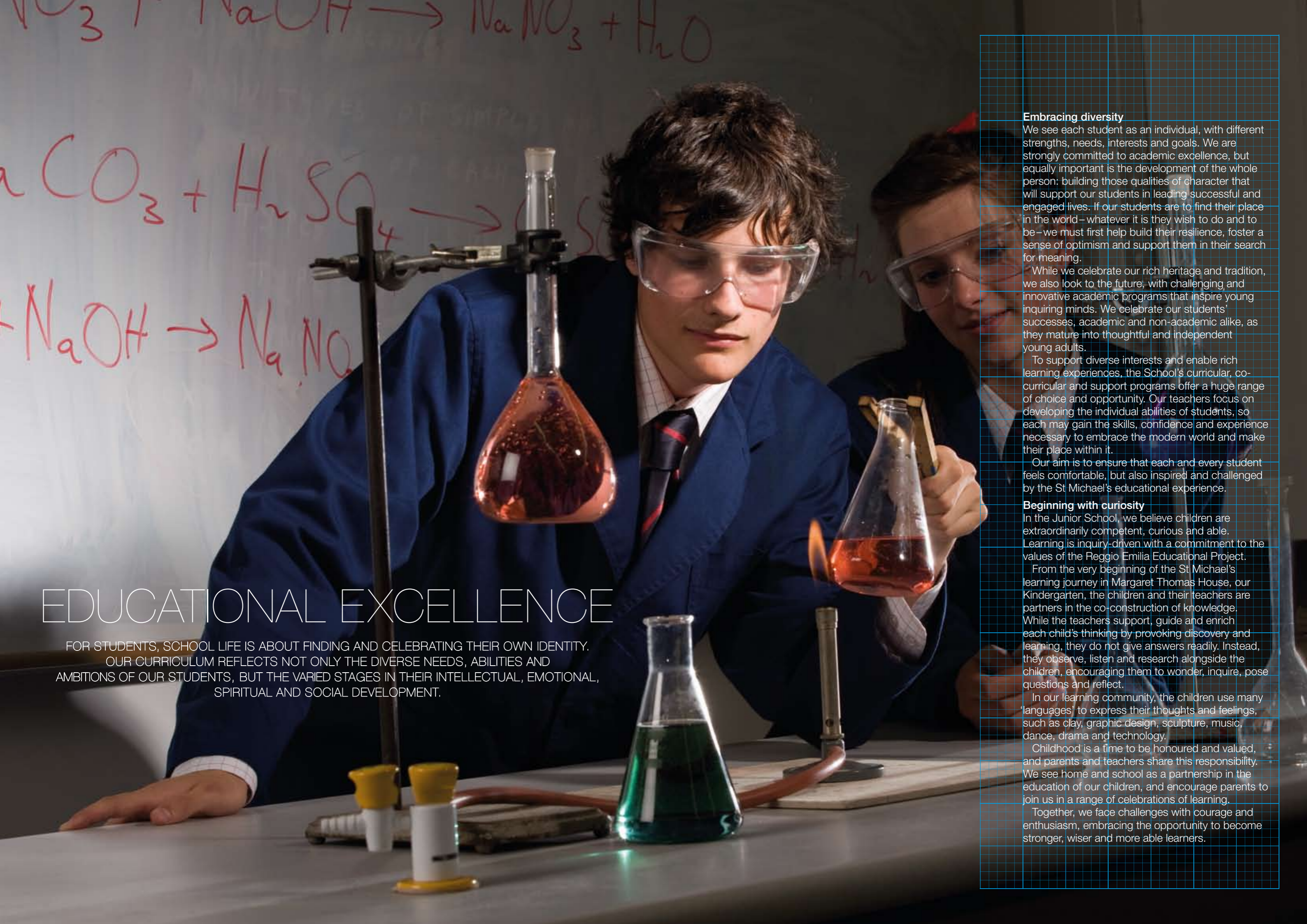
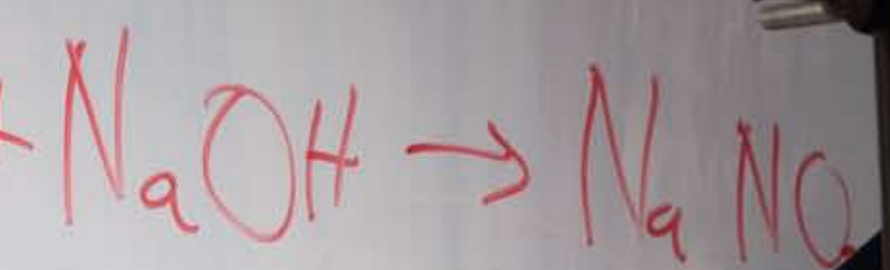
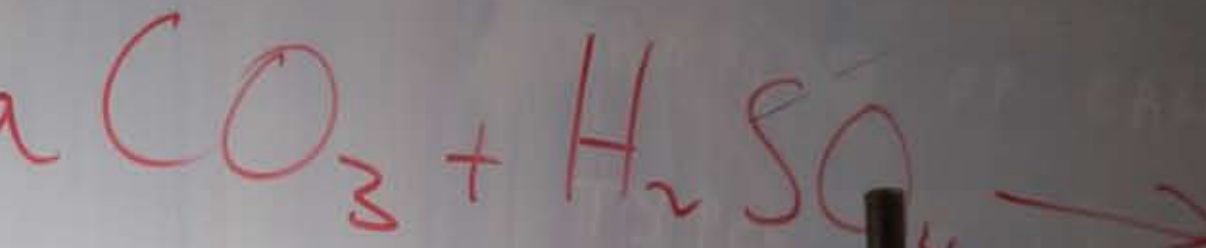
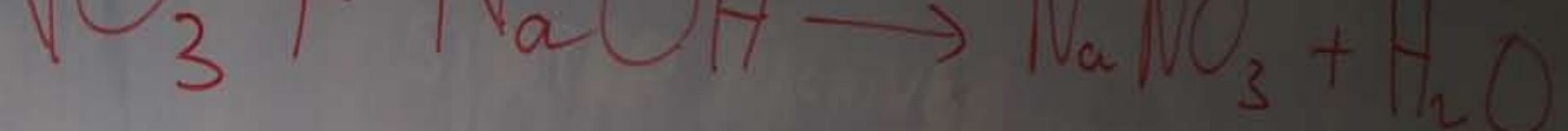
*Relationships* learning the importance of collaboration and supporting meaningful connection

*Innovation in learning* demonstrating a high commitment to research-based learning programs

*The creative, quiet mind* creating an environment with minimal distraction to enable students to achieve a clear mind for sustained attention, creativity and innovation, and full engagement in learning.

# THE VALUES BY WHICH WE LIVE

EVERY DECISION WE MAKE, EVERY ACTION WE UNDERTAKE, IS INFORMED BY OUR VALUES. THE MEMBERS OF OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY ARE THE RICHER FOR IT – WISER, MORE COMPASSIONATE AND MORE ENLIGHTENED.



# EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

FOR STUDENTS, SCHOOL LIFE IS ABOUT FINDING AND CELEBRATING THEIR OWN IDENTITY. OUR CURRICULUM REFLECTS NOT ONLY THE DIVERSE NEEDS, ABILITIES AND AMBITIONS OF OUR STUDENTS, BUT THE VARIED STAGES IN THEIR INTELLECTUAL, EMOTIONAL, SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

## Embracing diversity

We see each student as an individual, with different strengths, needs, interests and goals. We are strongly committed to academic excellence, but equally important is the development of the whole person: building those qualities of character that will support our students in leading successful and engaged lives. If our students are to find their place in the world – whatever it is they wish to do and to be – we must first help build their resilience, foster a sense of optimism and support them in their search for meaning.

While we celebrate our rich heritage and tradition, we also look to the future, with challenging and innovative academic programs that inspire young inquiring minds. We celebrate our students' successes, academic and non-academic alike, as they mature into thoughtful and independent young adults.

To support diverse interests and enable rich learning experiences, the School's curricular, co-curricular and support programs offer a huge range of choice and opportunity. Our teachers focus on developing the individual abilities of students, so each may gain the skills, confidence and experience necessary to embrace the modern world and make their place within it.

Our aim is to ensure that each and every student feels comfortable, but also inspired and challenged by the St Michael's educational experience.

## Beginning with curiosity

In the Junior School, we believe children are extraordinarily competent, curious and able. Learning is inquiry-driven with a commitment to the values of the Reggio Emilia Educational Project.

From the very beginning of the St Michael's learning journey in Margaret Thomas House, our Kindergarten, the children and their teachers are partners in the co-construction of knowledge. While the teachers support, guide and enrich each child's thinking by provoking discovery and learning, they do not give answers readily. Instead, they observe, listen and research alongside the children, encouraging them to wonder, inquire, pose questions and reflect.

In our learning community, the children use many 'languages' to express their thoughts and feelings, such as clay, graphic design, sculpture, music, dance, drama and technology.

Childhood is a time to be honoured and valued, and parents and teachers share this responsibility. We see home and school as a partnership in the education of our children, and encourage parents to join us in a range of celebrations of learning.

Together, we face challenges with courage and enthusiasm, embracing the opportunity to become stronger, wiser and more able learners.

### **Small steps become giant leaps**

The Junior School is an active, challenging and secure environment. Each room has an intimacy akin to that of the family home, with creative use of light and dark, and an overriding sense of beauty. Shared central spaces and state of the art buildings are designed to invite participation, encouraging students to investigate, observe, reflect and relaunch their ideas.

We make visible the children's thinking and learning by using documentation enabling others to see and hear the traces of our learning so making it possible to engage in rich dialogue.

All children build on their literacy and numeracy skills within a rich transdisciplinary landscape which gives meaning and purpose to their learning. Our expert team of teachers bring alive an array of subjects, including science and technology, humanities, the visual and performing arts, information technology and communication, Japanese language and culture, physical education, spiritual growth and contributing citizenship.

### **The journey continues**

We believe that all students become more engaged in their studies if they are given greater control over what and how they learn. Accordingly, as our students progress through the School, we encourage them to take increasing responsibility for their learning, and a more active role in considering alternatives for their future.

In Years 7 and 8, the curriculum reflects the belief that students in early secondary schooling benefit from participating in a broad range of core learning opportunities. Students at these levels elect to take either Japanese or French.

In Year 9, the curriculum provides many more opportunities for choice, as we encourage students to try out those subjects that they may wish to take in Year 10 and beyond. As the journey proceeds, we continue to provide an invigorating learning environment in which students acquire the knowledge and skills that are critical to becoming collaborative and life-long learners.





*One community: guest conductor Jonathan Wong is an Old Michaelian and former Co-Captain of the School.*

### **The big picture**

St Michael's embraces diversity, so we cater for a broad range of student interests and take great pleasure in celebrating student achievements, whatever form those achievements may take. To us, excellence is about much more than success in a narrow set of pen-and-paper examinations; excellence concerns the whole person.

However, there is still no denying the excellent results at the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) achieved by our students, who consistently rank among the highest performers in Victoria.

To prepare our students for this challenge, the School provides them with additional support and guidance during Years 9 and 10, including extensive career and subject counselling.

In 2010, St Michael's introduced 'Gateway to VCE': three key initiatives that aim to provide Year 10 students with the best possible foundation for the crucial VCE years ahead.

- Through the Learning Mentor Program, a team of specially trained staff members support, monitor and guide students in their academic and co-curricular pursuits, supporting them as they continue to assume more responsibility for their own learning.
- Total Program Subjects are a new type of Year 10 elective that link academic and co-curricular pursuits in a way that enriches both. Skills and theory are covered in the classroom, while related co-curricular elements provide the opportunity to apply and implement.
- Under the Entry to VCE initiative, all students will complete a robust Year 10 program of subjects, rather than being accelerated directly (and prematurely) from Year 9 into a Year 11 Study. In Year 10, key learning practices will provide a sound foundation for the structures and expectations of VCE.

### **Fostering the creative, quiet mind**

We aim to build a learning environment that enables students to focus without distraction, draw on their strengths and talents, and sustain their attention on the task at hand.

### **Innovation in learning**

St Michael's is widely recognised for its innovative learning practices.

We have developed a model of assessment and reporting that places the needs of the learner at the centre of the process. This model is unique in the sense that it provides a coherent and consistent set of practices that extend from Kindergarten through to Year 12.

The key strength of the model is its focus on providing timely feedback to both students and parents; it is designed to be a powerful vehicle for communication. The model embraces a number of different but interrelated components, including written reports, parent-teacher-student conferences, portfolios, and peer and self-assessment.

Students in Margaret Thomas House, our Kindergarten, begin by developing a portfolio of their learning which is documented throughout the year. From Preparatory through to Year 6, the students' portfolios consist of celebrational pieces selected by the students, plus assessment pieces and documented examples of their learning, which make visible each student's growth over time.

In the Senior School, through our state-of-the-art system of online reporting, teachers place a series of 'assessment summaries' for every student on St Michael's secure intranet every six weeks. Parents can see the criteria that have been used to assess their child's performance on each task, plus the teacher's assessment of those criteria and the marks given.

### **A modern take on homework**

St Michael's views 'out-of-class work' – work done by students outside formal class times – as important in the development of independent study habits. Far from the old-fashioned notion of book-related 'homework', however, out-of-class work can embrace a range of diverse tasks that enrich academic study, such as watching something in the media, going to an art gallery, having a discussion with their parents or preparing a meal.

Nightly deadlines are avoided except in subjects where practice is important for class the next day. In most instances students are given a timeframe of a week or longer within which to complete a task, and can plan their time accordingly.

### **Black Feather**

Black Feather is St Michael's own professional development program, providing high-quality opportunities for all staff, and fostering connection, trust and mutual respect. We have begun involving parents in an expanding Black Feather program, as part of our commitment to supporting and enhancing strong home-school partnerships.



# THRIVING THROUGH DIVERSITY

THE BREADTH OF THE SCHOOL'S CO-CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES ENABLES THE SPECIAL TALENTS OF EACH STUDENT TO BE IDENTIFIED AND NURTURED, GIVING EVERY SINGLE INDIVIDUAL THE OPPORTUNITY TO REALISE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

### **Learning beyond the classroom**

From the first day at our Kindergarten, Margaret Thomas House, right through to Year 12, curricular studies are complemented with co-curricular programs. A solid foundation for lifelong learning and discovery is thus balanced by opportunities to pursue individual interests in diverse areas such as music, debating, drama, sport, creative writing, dance and outdoor education.

At every stage, we cater for a breadth of abilities and give each student individual support and encouragement.

### **Giving voice to creativity**

We believe that the performing arts play a vital role in helping students express themselves, thus learning and understanding more about themselves and each other in the process, and enriching their lives at school and beyond. Therefore our students are exposed to a vast range of drama, dance and music activities throughout their school lives.

Through our award-winning performing arts program, students have the opportunity to take part in an array of productions, staged at some of Melbourne's most exciting performance spaces.

Students with an interest in other forms of communication can choose to develop and hone their skills through public speaking, debating, mooted and creative writing groups.

### **Other fields**

St Michael's competes regularly in the Co-educational Independent Primary Schools Sports Association (CIPSSA) in the Junior School and the Association of Co-educational Schools (ACS) competition in the Senior School, where our strength has been demonstrated with consecutive victories in all three inter-school sports carnivals – swimming, cross country and athletics.

Sport at St Michael's is exciting and varied, and we offer a wide range of other sporting activities for students to explore, including Australian Rules football, hockey, netball, volleyball and soccer, as well as less traditional pursuits such as aerobics, gymnastics and water polo.

### **Horizons expanded**

Incorporating the beauty and vastness of Australia into the learning process, St Michael's outdoor education program offers significant opportunities for personal growth. Our students learn to challenge themselves in many ways, not only learning practical skills, but also developing life skills, using the great outdoors as a powerful tool for learning.

The program gives students the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities, from bushwalking, rafting and skiing, to rock-climbing, horse-riding and surfing. Each year, students build on skills learned in previous years.

The highlight for many is the Kosciuszko to Coast expedition in Year 11, where students spend an enthralling 21 days hiking and rafting from the highest peak in Australia to the mouth of the Snowy River.

Another flagship program is the Great Barrier Reef project – a four week expedition to one of the world's natural wonders which provides Year 10 students an exceptional off-site learning experience built around the academic study of Biology.



*Contemplating the grace, beauty and vastness of the Australian environment in the ultimate outdoor education experience: Kosciuszko to Coast.*

# A CARING CULTURE

ST MICHAEL'S IS MUCH MORE THAN BUILDINGS, TRADITIONS AND TEXTBOOKS. IT IS STUDENTS, TEACHERS, STAFF, PARENTS – PAST AND PRESENT, NEAR AND FAR – UNITED BY AN ENDURING BOND OF SHARED UNDERSTANDING AND COMMON IDEALS.

## **All for one and one for all**

St Michael's is one community. We foster a culture of support, care, inclusion and understanding, within a context of rich and respectful relationships.

Our compassionate community is strengthened by its medium size and single campus. This provides students with a seamless learning journey, where older students mentor younger students, and where skills and behaviours are developed within a common framework that envelops Kindergarten to Year 12.

Contributing citizenship is a vital component of our School community, and we continually seek opportunities for meaningful community engagement.

Throughout their school lives, our students are encouraged and supported as they participate in community-based activities, take on leadership roles and work closely with other students of all ages.

### **In-‘House’ support**

We see pastoral care as enhancement of the whole person – the physical, academic, social, emotional and spiritual. A strong sense of self is critical to wellbeing and resilience, and throughout St Michael’s this sense of self is affirmed every day, through having ideas respected and valued, and through being a member of a dynamic learning community.

Every staff member is involved in pastoral care, and together we share the responsibility for the wellbeing of our students.

Within their class groups in the Junior School and within their Houses in the Senior School, students feel a strong sense of belonging. They are known and valued for who they are, and they know someone will be there for them should they need advice or support or have any concerns, no matter how large or small.

Just as importantly, classroom teachers and House staff members are readily accessible if parents and guardians have a need for advice.

### **Spiritual leadership**

We welcome and embrace all faiths at St Michael’s, and place great emphasis on instilling in our students the universal fundamentals of compassion and respect that underpin all world religions.

The School motto, ‘Pro Ecclesia Dei’, means ‘for the Church of God’, and the traditions established by our founders, the Community of the Sisters of the Church, continue to be proudly honoured by all, with the help and support of our chaplain.

While Christian values impact on everything we do, we recognise that faith itself is utterly personal; accordingly, virtually all our liturgies are voluntary.

Multicultural and multi-faith, the School teaches the fundamentals of many religions, respects the beliefs of all members of our community, and encourages students to discern their own spiritual paths.





**Celebrating our students**  
Please refer to our website –  
[www.stmichaels.vic.edu.au/school-life](http://www.stmichaels.vic.edu.au/school-life) –  
to see a gallery of student activities.



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