

## St Columba's Language Policy

### Philosophy

*"Language has the power to bring the learning community together and overcome boundaries"*

*PYP From Principles into Practice (2019)*

At St Columba's we recognise that Language plays a central role in our ability to learn across the curriculum and impacts on the way we engage with the others in the world around us. There are many functions of language, as expressed by Halliday (1978) and all of these functions serve as motivation for communication. It was also Halliday (1980) who helped explain the connection between language and learning. He proposed that in order to become literate beings who can make sense of our world, we need to learn language, learn about language and learn through language. This idea guides the language learning at our school.



We appreciate that all teachers at our school are teachers of language and the importance of holding shared beliefs and practices around language learning.

Staff at St. Columba's believe that:

- Language is socially constructed and therefore relies on relationships
- By the time children come to school they already have capabilities and experiences as language learners



- Language is integral to culture, identity and ways of viewing the world
- Children learn language beyond the school setting and therefore language development relies on partnerships between schools, families and the wider community we live in
- Language is essential for communication, inquiry and thinking
- People are empowered through language to participate in the world of school and in the world around them
- Language is a vehicle for transdisciplinary learning as well as disciplinary learning
- It is important to nurture student's appreciation of the richness of language
- The rich heritage of First Nation Australian languages should be recognized within our school
- Literacy goes beyond traditional reading, writing, speaking and listening and includes skills associated with contemporary literacies (digital literacy, critical literacy, information literacy etc.)
- Home language needs to be valued and encouraged
- Every student should have the opportunity to learn an additional language
- Developing an understanding of and proficiency in one language assists in the development of further languages
- Technology can be used as a tool to develop language and contemporary literacy skills
- Play is a powerful tool for deepening children's language skills

### **Languages at St. Columba's**

There are many languages which contribute to who we are and how we express ourselves at St. Columba's. These include:

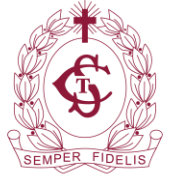
- Our language of Instruction which is English
- Our Additional Language which is Mandarin
- The home languages of our students, families and staff
- The language specific to subject areas - the language of Mathematics, Science, Geography etc.

### **Language of Instruction: English**

English is the primary language of instruction at St. Columba's. We use the Victorian Curriculum to inform our planning for, and assessment of, language teaching and learning.

The Victorian Curriculum English aims to ensure that students:

- learn to listen to, read, view, speak, write, create and reflect on increasingly complex and sophisticated spoken, written and multimodal texts across a growing range of contexts with accuracy, fluency and purpose



- appreciate, enjoy and use the English language in all its variations and develop a sense of its richness and power to evoke feelings, convey information, form ideas, facilitate interaction with others, entertain, persuade and argue
- understand how Standard Australian English works in its spoken and written forms and in combination with non-linguistic forms of communication to create meaning
- develop interest and skills in inquiring into the aesthetic aspects of texts, and develop an informed appreciation of literature.

English in the Victorian Curriculum is divided into three strands:

- ❖ **Language:** Students develop their knowledge of the English language and how it works
- ❖ **Literature:** The Literature strand engages students in the study of literary texts of personal, cultural, social and aesthetic value.
- ❖ **Literacy:** The Literacy strand aims to develop students' ability to interpret and create texts with appropriateness, accuracy, confidence, fluency and efficacy for learning in and out of school, and for participating in Australian life more generally.

### **Additional Language: Mandarin**

International Baccalaureate schools are committed to multilingualism and prioritize learning an additional language as a part of the Primary Years Programme. There are a number of reasons for this which include but are not limited to:

- Acknowledging that learning an additional language helps in the development of international mindedness and global citizenship
- Learning an additional language has cognitive benefits such as improving focus, problem solving skills and thinking skills

Chinese (Mandarin) is the additional language of our school and all students participate in Mandarin lessons from Prep to Year 6. Students receive one hour of Mandarin instruction each week.

The Victorian Curriculum Mandarin Second Language Learners informs the planning for and assessment of Mandarin. Mandarin is divided into the following two strands within the Victorian Curriculum:

- ❖ **Communicating:** Using language for communicative purposes in interpreting, creating and exchanging meaning.



- ❖ **Understanding:** Analysing and understanding language and culture as resources for interpreting and shaping meaning in intercultural exchange.

While not always possible or appropriate, where relevant students learn Mandarin within the context of our Programme of Inquiry.

We are working towards ensuring learning environments in our school reflect our commitment to learning Mandarin. Future considerations include upskilling teachers in Mandarin, embedding more Mandarin speaking within assemblies, and promoting Mandarin to a greater extent within our newsletter.



### **Family Languages: L1**

The language a child first learns with their family is formative for all language development. Research has shown that the importance of supporting family languages cannot be understated. It is vital to personal, social and academic growth that a child's mother tongue is valued (Cummings 2001). The use of a mother tongue does not hinder the acquisition of another language and in fact often has a positive impact on all language development in general.

Part of supporting family language is recognizing and celebrating the various languages spoken within our school community. Our aim is to continue to make these languages visible within classrooms and shared spaces.



We support family languages in many ways and are exploring further actions to assist with mother tongue development.

Current actions include:

- Providing opportunities for the sharing of and use of home languages
- Having bilingual books and texts available in our Library and online
- Using home language to activate prior knowledge across the curriculum

We aim to improve our practices by:

- Increasing teacher understanding and capacity to support family languages
- Ensuring we have up to date and relevant information on the languages our families speak at home and systems in place for the continued development of language profiles
- Helping families who have English as an additional language access communications from the school in their home language
- Identifying language support in the community for further development of mother tongue
- Ensuring that our school's environment reflects our family languages

### **English as an Additional Language (EAL)**

At St. Columba's, EAL students are identified and assessed based on the Victorian Curriculum EAL Pathways and EAL Developmental Continuum P-10. These also inform teacher planning. The aim of the Victorian Curriculum EAL is to help students use the English Language for communication, socialization and academic life at school and beyond the classroom.

EAL support is generally provided within the classroom context which allows students to maximise their opportunity to use language in meaningful contexts and with peers. This approach enables students to participate in various learning opportunities that take place throughout the day. Our aim is to ensure that a lack of competency in the language of instruction does not impede cognitive, academic and social development.

### **Learning Diversity and Language**

Learning language is a complex process and generally follows a developmental sequence. While we recognise the individuality of all learners at our school, there are some students who have identified learning needs within the Language domain. Examples may include students with dyslexia or dyspraxia or receptive language disorder. It may also include students who are gifted within the Language domain. As a school, we work in partnership with professionals in this area (such as speech therapists and educational psychologists) and our Learning Diversity Leader to support students with additional language needs.

### **Practices that support language**



We believe in a partnership and shared responsibility for developing language.

St. Columba's has the task of enriching what a child already knows and enhancing the child's language development through pedagogy that promotes intellectual stimulation, risk taking and further language use. As a result of this, the following expectations are in place.

All teachers will:

- Consider themselves teachers of language and support the learning of language across the curriculum and within particular disciplines e.g. Mathematics, Science, Art
- Provide learners with daily opportunities to use language meaningfully and to socially construct language through collaborative approaches
- Allow learners opportunities to express themselves using their mother tongue
- Implement learning experiences that draw on the students as active thinkers
- Support, as appropriate, the development of literacy skills through the meaningful context of the school's programme of inquiry
- Expose learners to a variety of languages, audiences, literature and forms of language
- Consider student's language needs when planning experiences
- Encourage agency within Language learning
- Ensure there is a balance of learning language, learning about language and learning through language across the curriculum
- Provide language rich environments that include at least English and our additional language, Mandarin
- Participate, as appropriate, in professional development aimed at increasing teacher capacity to support language learning.

All caregivers will:

- Actively support the development of their child's home language
- Communicate with the school their child's language background and history
- Encourage play and literature experiences which will assist their child in developing language skills

All students will:

- Participate in experiences that develop Language
- Share, as appropriate, their home language

**Assessment of Language**

Assessment and reflection inform all we do including language instruction. Please refer to our assessment for more information about assessment at St. Columba's



A Language Policy is dynamic, and we recognise that we will continue to evolve in our beliefs and practices

## References

- International Baccalaureate (2019) *From Principles into Practice* retrieved from <https://resources.ibo.org/pyp?>
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- Cummings, J. (2001) *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
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