Welcome Parents/ Caregivers and Students to the Middle Years

Learners and Learning in the Middle Years

All Middle Years learners are individuals who come from a range of linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds. They bring to learning their own prior knowledge and experiences, needs, interests, concerns, expectations and aspirations.

In addition, Middle Years learners are:

- experiencing adolescence and the accompanying emotional and physical changes
- learning to form, articulate and manage relationships
- keen to develop greater interdependence with their peers and independence in their lives
- questioning schooling and their engagement with schooling, reflecting on who they are, where they belong, what they value and where they’re going
- developing their own voice, often challenging the voices of their parents/caregivers, teachers and society
- aiming for a stronger sense of belonging through participation in wider adolescent cultures
- becoming aware that they can make changes for themselves and others.
To meet the needs of this range of learners, the learning process is complex, dynamic, interactive and cyclical, not linear. It involves students continuously extending, elaborating, reformulating and reflecting upon their frameworks of knowledge and values. Within this concept of progress in learning, students are active learners who learn at different rates and need multiple challenges. They also need to be supported in developing responsibility for their own learning, and enthusiasm for continuous learning.

In 2015, we will continue to implement the National Australian Curriculum, in particular focusing on the areas of History and Geography while continuing with English, Science and Maths Australian Curriculum subjects.

In addition there will be a whole school focus on Positive Education, Health and Japanese.

Behaviour Management – Centres on restorative practice and students reflecting on their own behavior. Behaviour expectations and class rules have already been negotiated.

21st Century Skills

Learning to collaborate with others and connect through technology are essential skills in a knowledge-based economy. The 21st-century skills are in four broad categories:

- Ways of thinking. Creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and learning
- Ways of working. Communication and collaboration
- Tools for working. Information and communications technology (ICT) and information literacy

Creative Thinking

Higher-order thinking requires students to manipulate information and ideas in ways that transform their meaning and implications. This transformation occurs when students combine facts and ideas in order to synthesise, generalise, explain, hypothesise or arrive at some conclusion or interpretation.

Manipulating information and ideas through these processes allows students to solve problems and discover new (for them) meanings and understandings. When students engage in the construction of knowledge, an element of uncertainty is introduced into the instructional process and makes instructional outcomes not always predictable; i.e. the teacher is not certain what will be produced by students. In helping students become producers of knowledge, the teacher’s main instructional task is to create activities or environments that allow them opportunities to engage in higher-order thinking.

Examples of such Higher Order Thinking Skills include:-

- Bloom’s Taxonomy
- De Bono’s Hats
- Thinkers’ Keys
We recognise and acknowledge students have different learning styles and different strengths. Middle Years staff plan and program to cater for the variety of different learning styles.

Curriculum

**English** – The English curriculum is built around the three interrelated strands of Language, Literature and Literacy. Our teaching and learning programs balance and integrate all three strands. Together the strands focus on developing students’ knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating. Learning in English builds on concepts, skills and processes developed in earlier years, and teachers will revisit and strengthen these as needed.

Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They listen to, read, view, interpret and evaluate spoken, written and multimodal texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade. These include various types of media texts including newspapers, film and digital texts, junior and early adolescent novels, poetry, non-fiction and dramatic performances. Students develop their understanding of how texts, including media texts, are influenced by context, purpose and audience.

**Maths** – Understanding number and place value from decimals to millions will be the focus in Term 1. Data collection, graphing and analysing data will be integrated through key Science and Humanities topics. **Mathletics**, a computer program, is used regularly to support learning and engage student interest in a fun and interactive way.

**Integrated Units of Work** – Using the Australian Curriculum with a focus on History, Geography and Science, students will build knowledge and skills through integrated units of work. We will be continuing to implement 21st Century Learning skills that include: collaboration, ethical understanding, global awareness, ICT, knowledge building, problem solving and innovations, self-regulation and assessment, skilled communication.

**Health & PE** – As part of our health and well-being program, we focus on anti-bullying programs, including cyber safety, growth and development and drug awareness. There are weekly class meetings and Middle School focus meetings to discuss issues relevant to students in the middle years. Fitness programs have a focus on using cooperation skills, strength and agility as well as increased aerobic capacity.

**Resource Based Learning**

The class teachers and the librarian, Lois Burrow will plan collaboratively to teach Middle Years students information literacy skills. These are how to define, locate, select, organise, present and assess the required information to meet a need.

**Define** - What is the problem I have to solve?
Locate - Where can I find the information I need?

Select - How can I search these sources effectively?

Organise - How can I organise the information so I can understand it better?

Present - How can I share this information with other people?

Assess - What have I learned from this and where to from here?

The initial topic will be **Changing Mindsets** where we will research well-known role models and investigate how positive mindsets develop healthy learning practices.

Middle Years students will be encouraged to borrow regularly for independent reading and to complete the **Premier's Reading Challenge for 2015**.

**Homework**

Homework in the Middle Years is a regular occurrence. It provides students with the opportunity to improve their time management skills. Most homework is flexible in the sense that it can work around after school activities such as sporting commitments.

Students are expected to do up to 30 mins (Year 5) and up to 45 mins (Year 6/7) of homework Monday to Thursday. A major element of homework set is keeping up with their 'in-class' load. Students quickly make the connection that the more they achieve at school the less they need to complete at home.

We encourage parents to take an interest in their child's learning at home, encouraging independence and offering to help in a variety of ways:

- Learning times tables
- Reading
- Spelling tasks
- Reading for their long-term assignments

**Middle Years Activities 2015**

- Transition Visits (Year 7 Findon High, Friday 13/3)
- Debating
- Learning Centre Helpers
- SAPSASA Sports
- Student Leader Elections
- Student Action Groups
- Sports Captain Elections
- Clipsal 500 (Thursday 26th February)
- Footsteps (25th July – 21st August)
- Chess
- Personal Project (term 3)
- Lunch time activities
- Aquatics (Monday 2nd November)
- Kidman Celebrates
- Graduation (Year 7s)

We look forward to a successful and productive 2015.