

ENGLISH/LITERACY POLICY

Literacy is the ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately, in a range of contexts. It is used to develop knowledge and understanding, to achieve personal growth and to function effectively in our society. Literacy also includes the recognition of number and basic mathematical signs and symbols within text.

“Literacy involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing. Effective literacy is intrinsically purposeful, flexible and dynamic and continues to develop throughout an individual’s lifetime. All Australians need to have effective literacy in English, not only for their personal benefit and welfare but also for Australia to reach its social and economic goals.”
Australia’s Language and Literacy Policy, Companion Volume to the Policy Paper, 1991, p.9

Education is primarily about the development of the whole person. It is essential that children learn sound literacy skills because they are crucial to the development of the individual made in God’s image and likeness. Also, with God’s help, the children can make a sound contribution to both their own and the common welfare, perceiving their world as something on which they can, and should, make a positive impact.

It is our responsibility, in teaching literacy to ensure that Gospel values are incorporated into the literacy program. These values are evident not only in the manner in which literacy is taught, but in the selection and acquisition of policies in regard to resources employed. The school reflects and promotes a belief in the children’s dignity and provides experiences that will develop their gifts. It also educates the children to live responsible lives, being concerned for both themselves and others and developing their sense of value as disciples of Jesus.

The notions of uniqueness of the individual, rights and responsibilities, the individual as part of a wider community, social justice and transformation of self and the community are integral to the teaching of literacy in our school.

The Goals of Teaching Literacy

The goals of literacy teaching at St Mary’s Primary School are to:

- educate the whole child, spirit, body and mind;
- develop in children effective and purposeful literacy skills in order that they may function confidently at school, at home and in society;
- individually challenge children according to ability and interests so they can reach their full potential;
- develop literacy skills that promote critical thinking and awareness;
- develop in the children a love of reading and writing;
- develop in the children a perception of themselves as life long learners;
- develop in the children literacy skills that assist them in interpreting their world.

Beliefs about Literacy Learning at St. Mary's Primary School:

We believe that student's literacy development is enhanced when the following beliefs are evident in literacy teaching K-6.

1. Learning is natural. Children learn best when involved, stimulated and challenged.

- Children are active participants in their learning.
- Opportunities are provided for children to engage in authentic reading and writing activities daily.
- Purposes are made explicit for learning.

2. Learning is a life long process. It is continuous, developmental and holistic.

- Learning opportunities are developmentally appropriate and based on needs.
- Activities are always meaningful and contextualised.

3. Learning is individual. Children learn at different rates, have different learning styles and come to us with different understandings.

- Children are seen as individuals with unique abilities.
- Instruction is individualised based on effective assessment of needs.
- Learning experiences are based on children's understandings.

4. Teachers' programs support the development of the students' potential in literacy.

- Programs are well-developed and based on the outcomes of the English K-6 Syllabus. They reflect the interconnectedness between Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing. Class programmes are also based on authentic assessment and high expectation of individual achievement.

Teaching and Learning Literacy Practices K-6

When teaching literacy the teachers at St. Mary's Primary School follow key teaching and learning practices from Kindergarten to Year 6 to ensure continuity and consolidation of learning.

A balanced approach to teaching literacy is required. At St. Mary's we believe there are a number of elements that come together to create an effective and comprehensive Literacy Program. They include:

- Talking and Listening – modelled, shared, guided and independent experiences and activities.
- Writing – modelled, shared, guided and independent writing. It also includes handwriting, spelling and grammar.
- Reading - modelled, shared, guided and independent reading.
- An exposure to all text types through each of the strands.

An Effective Reading Programme

We believe that an effective reading program provides daily instructional reading through:

- Foremost, an effective reading programme will instil in the children a love of reading.
- Modelled reading lessons with the teacher. This involves the teacher reading to the children, immersing them in the language of written texts. It also involves demonstrating reading behaviours and verbalising the cognitive processes involved with those behaviours.
- Shared reading lessons with the teacher. The teacher uses the experience to teach and model reading strategies. The teacher reads to and reads with the children. Shared reading can be used with a wide range of reading abilities at one time.
- Guided reading lessons with the teacher. The children read the text independently and practise their reading strategies with teacher support and scaffolding.
- Independent reading – an opportunity for students to independently read, analyse and comprehend texts.
- Reading to Students. The teacher reads to the students for enjoyment and pleasure. When reading to students, effective reading behaviours and a positive attitude can be demonstrated.
- Language Experience – The students are involved in a shared experience which is then used to jointly construct a text that is then used for further reading.
- Book discussion Groups – Small groups of students who meet to discuss, respond to and reflect on a text they have chosen to read.

An Effective Writing Programme

We believe that an effective writing program provides daily instructional writing through:

- Foremost, an effective writing programme will instil in the children a love of writing.
- Modelled writing lessons- The writing is the teacher's and the students are observers of the strategies demonstrated, the process used and the product created.
- Shared writing lessons-involves the teacher (as scribe) and students collaboratively composing a piece of writing.
- Guided writing lessons with the teacher – involves the teacher guiding the students in their attempts to create individual written texts, responding to students' attempts and extending their thinking during the process.
- Independent writing – the student's take responsibility for the writing process using the knowledge and skills gained.
- An effective Writing programme also includes;
- Grammar – it is taught in context for all stages as per the English K-6 Syllabus document. Specific grammar is taught through the text type focus.
- Handwriting – Explicit handwriting lessons will take place in K-6 classrooms, emphasising correct posture and pencil grip to develop fluency, style and speed.
- Spelling - Explicitly teaching a range of spelling strategies and providing appropriate spelling activities throughout the week.

An Effective Talking and Listening Programme

We believe that an effective talking and listening program provides daily instructional speaking and listening through:

- Develop confidence for speaking and effective listening in the children.
- Modelled talking and listening – This involves the teacher being the model of appropriate speech and active listening skills.
- Guided talking and listening – this involves the teacher guiding students with structured opportunities for talking and listening.
- Independent talking and listening - the student's take responsibility for their own