



*To Delight and Inspire*

**Village School**

# STRATEGIC PLAN



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## CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Village School started in 1982 in an old wooden cottage on the Penguin Books site at Maroondah Highway, Ringwood. This location was temporary until the school was able to purchase the current site in Holloway Road and the school moved to this site in February 1985. Currently Village School sits on 8 acres of land in North Croydon, with two buildings housing four permanent classrooms, a refurbished portable for a library/resource centre, a cedar wood cabin housing the kitchen, a portable housing the administration, storage and another potential classroom, and the Village Hall which is used both by the school and the wider community. There is another portable which is due for demolition and there are plans for a new permanent administration block.

The three founding teachers, Carol Glover (Principal), Lola Hill and Trevor Stacey were previously the three primary staff members of a school called E.R.A. (Educational Reform Association). They were successful in securing a bank loan with a government guarantee and with Croydon Council approving the school for an enrolment of up to 240 students from prep to year 10, Village School came to occupy its present site. Village school has yet to expand into secondary teaching and currently has a student enrolment capacity of 80.

Village School has successfully maintained the teaching philosophy of these three teachers which is best described in this quote from educationist J.S. Bruner:

***“We begin with the hypothesis that any subject can be taught in an intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development. It is a bold hypothesis and an essential one in thinking about the nature of the curriculum.”*** (This statement was written by J.S. Bruner in 1960.)

From the outset Village School has held firmly onto these two main tenets:

1. The value of mutual respect between staff and students.
2. The right of the child to be taught as an individual

These two statements are the cornerstones of every activity and event at Village School and they are reflected in the empowerment given to the children, who run daily meetings, make decisions about when and how they work and contribute to curriculum planning. At Village School everyone, teachers, parents and children work on a first name basis as we believe respect grows through mutual understanding and cooperation, not through using formal names for those in authority. Individual learning plans and differentiated learning methods ensure that children are given appropriate tasks to challenge and extend their learning.

We acknowledge the need to provide different styles of learning spaces for the different levels. The children at entrance level to the school are ‘explorers’ in learning and therefore their classroom is a rich resource of equipment, recycled materials, objects from nature and lots of language and number information. However concrete learning materials are valued throughout the school and every classroom has an abundance of maths and language games, and construction equipment.

We also acknowledge that children develop at different rates so the children’s individual learning plans monitor the child’s individual progress and individual learning goals rather than just teaching to benchmarks.

We identify four learning stages on the child's learning journey:

- Explorers      Naturally inquisitive, constantly testing and exploring objects in the world around them and learning vocabulary, logic, cause and effect and numeracy through play and experimentation. Writing freely using pictures pictograms, signs, numerals and letters to express their thoughts and ideas. Constantly making, doing and role playing.
- Settlers        Starting to settle into routines and understand the 'systems' of learning while still having the freedom to explore ideas and materials, designing and constructing, learning through games and following their own particular passions. Many numeracy and literacy skills are still acquired and practiced through games and activity centres.
- Developers    The children are developing skills in all the academic disciplines while they work through theme based topics which give a 'bigger picture' or real life context to their learning. There is a balance of concrete and abstract learning which is different for every child.
- Contractors    The children take more responsibility for their learning program and often 'contract' or negotiate work tasks and themes. At this stage there is an awareness of the need to learn, to prepare for future study, to hone personal, academic and creative skills and to take on ownership of their own learning.

From the beginning Village School has used progressive teaching methods which are now currently endorsed by the work and research of such people as Australian Educational Consultant Kath Walker, the English teacher, researcher and writer, Dylan Wiliam and Dr Joseph Renzulli, the American educational psychologist who developed the 'School-wide Enrichment Model' for developing children's individual talents.

Village School is best described as an 'independent, democratic and progressive school which empowers and therefore engages children in meaningful learning journeys.

## MISSION STATEMENT

We aim to delight and inspire children to become resourceful, independent learners.

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Growth

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# Teaching and Learning

Village School's focus is underpinned by the 5 R's (resiliency, respect, responsibility, reliability and resourcefulness). The curriculum provides a real balance of outdoor 'real life' experiences with indoor academic activities and acknowledges the value of the community, both local and beyond as part of this real life learning.

We aim to:

- Select staff who demonstrate a philosophical and pedagogical alignment with Village School
- Maintain an integrated curriculum with a prime focus on literacy and numeracy.
- Focus on the individual and cater for individual needs within a dynamic, interactive teaching environment
- Improve individual student outcomes according to their individual potential.
- Empower students to take the initiative in their own learning journeys
- Enable students to become creative and independent thinkers.
- Foster ongoing involvement in the arts (performing and fine arts).
- Maintain individual learning plans which acknowledge individual learning styles.
- Utilise the wider community for improved learning and understanding.
- Maintain the Village Farm program as an integral part of the daily curriculum of Village School.

## Strategies

1. Provide detailed position descriptions and observe potential teachers in the homegroup rooms before hiring new staff.
2. Allow students democratic input into curriculum planning and daily running of the school, through brainstorming, whole school meetings and student surveys.
3. Ensure each learning experience caters for multiple learning styles and outcomes by offering different styles of work tasks and using different teaching approaches.
4. Employ the framework of the AusVELS as the basis for curriculum planning and adapt it to suit the big picture topics that shape the academic learning in the classrooms.
5. Ensure the fine arts are included in the integrated homegroup learning topics
6. Involve the whole school in a major performance at least once a year.
7. Acquire a school bus and ensure staff have bus licences so that learning from the local community becomes more accessible.

8. Involve the children in daily tethering, feeding and watering of the animals and also have regular clean up sessions so that the children maintain the farm program
9. Run weekly sessions based on the gardening program and the local environment and link this to the selling of the horse manure, eggs and the vegetables.

## **Review**

- Conduct twice yearly progressive achievement tests from A.C.E.R. which measure individual student's abilities with reference to age level benchmarks
- Use Naplan results when available to cross reference with A.C.E.R. results
- Staff update learning plans and review overall curriculum planning each term.
- Ongoing formative assessment practices.
- Principal and teachers conduct an annual review of all teaching practices
- Ongoing tracking of individual students

## Student Life

The students have the right to feel physically and emotionally safe in the school environment. They should also feel free to have a voice in the school community. They are encouraged to develop a sense of connectivity with the environment and all living things.

We aim to

- Promote a climate of mutual respect between adults and children
- Foster 'Mindfulness' as an integral part of daily school life.
- Utilise the animal program to develop responsibility, empathy and respect.
- Utilise the performing arts program and the camping programs to promote self-esteem and resilience
- Foster resilience when confronted by difficult and/or challenging social interactions

## Strategies

1. To continue daily student run meetings which give students a voice and opportunities for leadership.
2. To continue to implement the student behaviour policy.
3. To provide regular opportunities for relaxation and reflection.
4. Ensure a variety of animals are on site and incorporated into the daily school program.
5. Provide horse-riding, Freeform lessons, whole school performances and camps as a way of increasing children's resilience

## Review

- Staff review behaviour policy every year
- Staff monitor student involvement through homegroup and whole school meetings on a weekly basis e.g. Formative assessment practices.
- Review accident book to monitor student accidents
- Document difficult student behaviours and include them in individual files.

## **Staff Professional Life**

Village School also believes staff need to feel physically and emotionally safe in the school environment. We provide a professionally stimulating, collaborative and supportive teaching environment.

We aim to

- Keep staff abreast of latest educational trends and initiatives
- Provide regular professional development opportunities
- Provide opportunities for staff to be part of the decision making and leadership.
- Regularly review staff procedures and practices.

## **Strategies**

1. Provide regular opportunities for relaxation and reflection.
2. Conduct weekly staff meetings.
3. Implement whole staff and individual professional development courses.
4. Identify, share and develop formative assessment practices throughout the school.
5. Implement a teacher performance plan, acknowledging AITSL and tailoring aims to suit Village School pedagogy.

## **Review**

- During the weekly meetings staff monitor the progress of staff's professional development.
- Once a year staff collaborate to plan ongoing professional development and support.
- Peer evaluation of teachers takes place across the year through observation, homegroup collaborations and ongoing discussion at staff meetings.

## Community

Members of the school community are companions on our journey to fulfil the school's mission and vision. Village School welcomes parents and the wider community to be an integral part of school life.

We aim to

- Empower parents to be part of the decision making of the school
- Draw on the skills and talents of the community to enhance the children's learning experiences.
- Allow time for open and honest exchange of ideas and issues.

## Strategies

1. Invite parents to homegroup meetings each term.
2. Run formal interviews and provide time for informal discussions.
3. Invite parents to be part of the school's daily activities e.g. Excursions, horse riding, options and classroom support.
4. Facilitate the existence of the Parents and Friends group.
5. Structure the school board so that the majority membership is from the parent body.
6. Give the parents another voice through the position of Parent Rep. on the board.

## Review

- Each year the school conducts either a written or phone based survey to gauge parent satisfaction.
- A whole school parent meeting each term provides a forum for parents to contribute
- Twice yearly parent/teacher interviews also provide valuable feedback from the community.

# Governance and Management

The School Board strives to provide an ongoing vibrant and sustainable environment for the school to attain its educational and vocational goals.

We aim to

- Oversee the strategic plan
- To grow the school to an optimum number of 95 students with a ceiling of 100 students
- Provide sound financial management
- Review the admissions policy, planning and practice
- review strategic student enrolments
- Set school fees
- Maintain optimal business practices
- Conduct appraisals
- Appraise the performance of the principal
- Manage and mitigate risks

## Strategies

1. Budget for adequate numbers of teaching staff and learning support staff to ensure optimal student learning.
2. Ensure all staff have opportunities to keep abreast of current trends in order to deliver best practice for the school.

## Review

- The strategic plans are reviewed and revised both by staff and board on an annual basis.
- Staff are consulted and given input into the shaping of the strategic plan.
- Finance committee reviews financial performance on a monthly basis.

## School Growth

There is room for student numbers to grow with the optimum number being 95 students spread across five home groups.

Therefore we aim to:

- Accept student enrolments from prep to year 5 until the optimum number is reached
- Maintain vertical homegroup compositions to allow for growth in any of the year levels.
- Set up a pre-school on part of the property once optimum numbers have been established.

## Strategies

1. Maintain monthly school tours.
2. Conduct private tours as requested.
3. Advertise regularly in local papers and Melbourne Child.
4. Maintain up to date web page and also a school Facebook page.
5. Contact local kindergartens and child care centres when events are occurring at the school.
6. Set up connections between the school and other organisations eg. Kinders and secondary schools.
7. Set up displays in shopping centres and local festivals.
8. Seek editorials in local and mainstream press.
9. Monitor and act on feedback from enrolments, enquiries and visitors to the school.
10. Maintain monthly orientation program for new preps in the second half of the year.
11. Monitor feedback from parents who withdraw their children.

## Review

- Monitor enrolment and attrition figures at regular finance and marketing meetings.
- Review budget spending for marketing on an annual basis.
- Conduct self-assessment through LEAD surveys, National School Improvement tool or in-school surveys.

## Facilities and Infrastructure

Strive to provide the best possible physical and learning resources to meet contemporary needs and provide a physically safe yet challenging environment

We aim to

- Provide a safe working environment by ensuring implementation of a comprehensive OHS Policy consistent with legislation.
- Oversee the Master Plan
- Review and develop the maintenance and refurbishment plan
- Provide up to date ICT facilities to support teaching and learning
- Maintain and develop environmentally sustainable facilities and practices.
- Maintain and develop the Village Farm

## Strategies

1. Engage OHS representative to attend board meetings
2. Provide ongoing improvements to the physical infrastructure:
  - a. a permanent administration building
  - b. demolish an existing portable double classroom which contains asbestos
  - c. To refurbish the existing administration into a double classroom.
3. To develop and implement an ICT plan
4. To manage a rolling maintenance plan

## Review

- OH&S committee meets on a monthly basis to ensure the school is maintained as a safe working environment and presents findings to the board.
- The Board reviews the Master Plan each year in consultation with the teaching staff.

# **PRIORITY AREAS FOR SELF IMPROVEMENT**

## **Quality Teaching and Learning**

Following up from the last parent satisfaction survey in 2013 where the academic program was one of three issues that scored a little lower than the remaining items, there will be a focus on Quality Teaching and Quality Learning with particular reference to the maths curriculum and the maintaining of individual learning plans for all students. Standardised testing in the form of ACER administered tests and NAPLAN shows that there is a general bias towards literacy skills in terms of student achievements.

Village students do particularly well with reading, writing and spelling whereas the maths results are generally in the average range rather than the exceptional over average (with a few noted exceptions). There is a perceived lack of interest in maths for many of the students, even when they are able to achieve high standards so this has become a priority area for improvement.

## **Transparency and Accountability**

Village School has always been committed to individual teaching and learning and has always provided differentiated learning for students. Teachers plan their study themes to allow for individual differences; different learning styles and different abilities. Teachers felt there was a need to make this planning more visible to the school community by working towards developing individual learning plans for each child.

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Act Plan 2010-2014**

One of the considerations is also to integrate indigenous studies into the school curriculum in a more meaningful way, which sits with the curriculum delivery style at Village School. Therefore we aim to develop indigenous studies and our local language as one of the themes to be studied during our two year curriculum cycle. This will involve working in conjunction with a staff member from the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages as well as our local community centre at the Federation Estate in Ringwood.

## **Growth Plan**

The school has the physical capacity for one more homegroup. As student numbers rise there is an interim plan of having one and a half prep teachers so that we can accommodate the larger numbers when part-time preps are at school. Increasing intake at the lower end of the school will offset later natural attrition and reduce the need to take in students in middle primary which can be unsettling. Marketing therefore targets prep enrolments primarily.

## **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **SHORT TERM GOALS \***

1. Introduce an indigenous whole school theme into the two year study theme cycle.
2. Raise the profile of maths and improve student attitudes to maths.
3. Establish improved Individual Learning Plans for every student in the school.
4. Open a fifth homegroup.

*\*See Village School Improvement Plan*

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

- 2013 A parent survey was conducted to gain feedback about the homegroup teachers, the school curriculum, school events and general communication. Communication had been an issue in previous surveys and processes such as direct teacher/parent emails, an e newsletter and whole school texts and emails had been implemented. The 2013 survey revealed that school/parent communication had improved.
- 2014 We are currently going through a process of internal assessment of our teaching practices, following on from our 2013 involvement in a funded assessment project through ISV. Using AITSL as a reference the teachers have produced a document containing specific capabilities for Village School Teachers. In term four peer assessment is taking place through observation and reference to these listed capabilities.
- A math's survey was conducted with the students in the upper primary as part of the new maths improvement initiative.
- 2015 Conduct LEAD Parent Satisfaction Survey and devise an in-house student satisfaction survey.
- 2016 Conduct LEAD Governance Survey.