



# Urquhart Park Primary School

## Teaching and Learning Policy

### Teaching and Learning Context:

At Urquhart Park Primary School we strive to develop resilient students who have a highly developed capacity to inquire, create, challenge, think internationally, be engaged and be responsible. As educators we always look for continuous school improvement and challenge ourselves to give to the learners we teach the best opportunities in education. Student learning is greatly affected by the quality of teaching that they experience and our teachers strive so that their teaching skills, through knowledge and commitment are of the highest quality.

After much research and comparative studies of available curriculum, the Primary Years Programme (PYP) of the International Baccalaureate (IB) was chosen as the vehicle for this continued growth. The driving force behind the PYP is a deeply held philosophy about the nature of international education expressed in the mission statement of the IB and in the IB Learner Profile. The mission statement expresses the IB's overall purpose in promoting and developing programmes of international education. It states:

*The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.*

*To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.*

*These programmes encourage learners across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.*

In 2018, Urquhart Park Primary School is hoping to become authorised as a PYP school. In the PYP, the importance of the traditional subject areas is acknowledged: language, mathematics, social studies, science, the arts and personal, social and physical education are specified components of the PYP curriculum model. Overall expectations for each subject, within each age range, are specified in detailed scope and sequence documents. At Urquhart Park Primary School, as a Victorian Government School, these expectations are outlined in our Victorian Curriculum documents. The PYP does not replace the curriculum set by the Victorian Government but rather integrates all subjects traditionally taught under the 'umbrella' of this approach.

It is particularly important for learners in the primary years of education to acquire skills in context, and to explore content that is relevant to them and that transcends the boundaries of the traditional subjects. The PYP curriculum is centred on six transdisciplinary themes based around shared human commonalities that are considered essential in the context of international education. These themes are supported by knowledge, concepts, and skills from the traditional subject areas but utilise them in ways that transcend the confines of these subjects, thereby contributing to the transdisciplinary model of teaching and learning. (Reference: IB (2008) *Towards a Continuum of International Education*).

The PYP is designed for learners between the ages of 3 and 12 years. It is an international, transdisciplinary programme designed to foster the development of the whole child, not just in the classroom but also through other means of learning. The PYP focuses on the total growth of the child, touching hearts as well as minds and encompassing social, physical, emotional and cultural needs in addition to academic welfare. The philosophy of the PYP, as it directly affects the child, is expressed in a series of desired attributes and traits that characterise learners with an international perspective. Taken together, they create the IB Learner Profile.

The IB has focused on developing the kind of learner who, in the struggle to establish a personal set of values and a code of ethics, will be laying the foundation upon which international-mindedness will develop and flourish. The attributes of such a learner are listed in the IB Learner Profile. The IB Learner Profile is the mission statement in action; it is central to the IB definition of what it means to be internationally minded, and it directs schools to focus on learning. The teacher needs to interpret these attributes in a manner appropriate to the age and development of the student.

### **Rationale:-**

- to ensure high quality teaching and learning experiences for learners of all abilities and aptitudes
- to provide a framework for teaching and learning within which there is flexibility and scope for creativity
- to provide coherence of approach and consistency of expectations
- to make explicit the entitlement of all learners
- to raise attainment by increasing levels of learner motivation, participation and independence
- to promote reflection on, and sharing of, best practice
- to promote an understanding of how learning takes place
- to make explicit a baseline for monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning that takes place
- to provide practical guidance and clear procedures
- to provide a focus for development
- to inform teachers, students, parents, school council and the wider community about the aims and processes of teaching and learning.

### **Aims:**

At Urquhart Park Primary School, we recognise that all learners have special skills, abilities and aptitudes and all have an entitlement to access a broad, challenging and appropriate curriculum. Every learner is also entitled to experience a variety of teaching and learning styles and the appropriate level of individual support which will enable them to achieve their full potential.

UPPS aims, through successful teaching and learning, to develop the whole person and to enable our students to become lifelong learners. All staff have a responsibility, collectively and individually, to contribute to the delivery of the broad, challenging and appropriate curriculum. In addition they individually have a responsibility to strive to deliver lessons where the teaching and learning is of the highest quality and where the learning needs of all learners are met.

We recognise that continued professional support, coaching and mentorship at whole school, team and individual level is essential to empower staff to deliver effective learning experiences and we hope that this policy will help provide teachers with a framework of guidance to help them deliver learning and support of the highest quality.

At UPPS, our teaching and learning aims to:

- improve learning outcomes through quality teaching practices and programs
- provide learners with optimism and self esteem
- encourage high achievement
- develop independent learners who accept responsibility for their own learning
- provide a highly skilled staff who are enthusiastic about teaching and learning
- provide learners with an understanding of and respect for cultural diversity
- develop students who display all aspects of the IB Learner Profile.

Our policy is underpinned by the following beliefs and understandings:-

- All children can learn.
- Children learn in different ways and at different rates.
- Learning will be more effective when the learner has ownership of, and understands the objectives of their learning.
- High expectations are important for parents, teachers and students.
- It is the teacher that makes the difference.

### **Implementation:**

***As teachers we know that learning will be effective when:***

- the environment is secure, stable and stimulating
- students' self-esteem is high
- students understand the purpose of the learning and see relevance to their own experience
- students understand the ways in which learning takes place
- the learning builds on prior knowledge and understanding
- success criteria are explicit and models are provided
- the learning is active and collaborative
- independent learning and thinking are facilitated and encouraged
- there are opportunities for creativity and utilising different learning styles
- students can self-assess, know what they need to do to improve and are able to set appropriate targets
- students have opportunities to transfer skills, knowledge and understanding to other contexts.

### **Access to Learning**

**It is the policy of Urquhart Park Primary School that:-**

***Teachers will provide a learning environment which is supportive and productive.***

*This means that teachers will:*

- build positive relationships with and respect, care and value each student
- use teaching strategies which promote student self-confidence and willingness to take risks with their learning
- support students to feel confident to contribute ideas without fear of being 'put down'
- encourage students to move 'outside the square' with their thinking and learning
- ensure each student experiences success through structured support
- acknowledge and value the effort individual students put into improving their work

- ensure teaching of concepts and skills in the core subject areas of Literacy and Numeracy

**Teachers will provide a learning environment which promotes independence, interdependence and self-motivation.**

This means that teachers will:-

- encourage and support students to take responsibility for their learning
- structure learning experiences which provide support and scaffold learning
- provide clear, criteria based, and when appropriate, collaborative assessment processes
- encourage students to set goals for their learning and reflect and self-monitor their progress

**Teachers will ensure the needs, backgrounds, perspectives and interests of the students are reflected in the learning program.**

This means that teachers will:-

- use a variety of teaching strategies to support different ways of thinking and learning
- encourage diversity and autonomy
- include students' personal interests (sports, hobbies) and social/ethical concerns as the context of topics
- provide a stimulating classroom environment that generates active interest in topics
- incorporate tasks with an open ended aspect that allows students to work at different levels and paces
- give individual support to students in need of particular attention including developing individual learning plans
- incorporate a range of technologies into learning sequences in ways that are meaningful

**Teachers will challenge and support students to develop deep levels of thinking and application.**

This means that teachers will:-

- provide teaching sequences which promote sustained learning that builds over time
- relate current learning to work done in previous teaching sessions
- provide material that encourages students to raise questions and make suggestions
- use strategies that challenge and support students to question and reflect
- use strategies to develop investigative and problem solving skills
- use strategies to foster imagination and creativity
- emphasise the quality of learning by having high expectations of student achievement
- praise efforts towards the production of quality work
- provide support for students having difficulty on the basis that their work needs to improve to meet expectations

**Teachers will monitor student learning through a range of assessment practices.**

This means that teachers will:-

- use a variety of methods to assess student understandings
- ensure assessment incorporates a range of levels of thinking (comprehension, analysis) etc
- use a variety of reporting modes for assessment
- ensure that students receive frequent constructive feedback that supports further learning and encourages them to monitor and take responsibility for their own learning
- make assessment criteria explicit
- encourage reflection and self-assessment

- use evidence from assessment to inform future planning and teaching

**Teachers will provide opportunities for students to connect with their community and practices beyond their classroom.**

This means that teachers will:-

- provide tasks that link the learning to a variety of aspects of real life
- organise appropriate visitors and excursions to reinforce learning opportunities
- use a range of learning technologies to promote new knowledge and understandings

**The school and class organisation should consider the following.**

- Aim for minimum interruptions in priority areas – numeracy and literacy.
- Allow for flexible groupings of students for focused teaching where possible.
- Allocations of time, staff, resources and approaches must be responsive to the needs and reflect creative uses of time, space and other resources.

**Teaching and Learning as a Collaborative Partnership between Home and School:**

We see teaching and learning as a process of co-operative teamwork. We welcome and encourage the involvement of parents and others in the community. All members of the school community (teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and students) work towards the success of this policy by:

***Teachers work towards the Teaching and Learning Policy aims by:***

- providing a challenging and stimulating programme of study designed to enable all learners to reach the highest standards of personal achievement
- recognising and being constantly aware of the needs of each individual learner according to ability and aptitude
- ensuring learning is progressive and continuous
- being good role models – punctual, well prepared and organised
- having a positive attitude to change and the development of their own expertise
- working collaboratively with a shared philosophy and commonality of practice and purpose
- ensuring early contact with parents to discuss matters which affect a learner's happiness, progress and behaviour
- offering a differentiated program within the classroom will provide opportunities through inquiry for extended learning
- ensuring that learners of exceptional ability, will be extended within the classroom programs through guided individual inquiry and along with their parents, notified of the variety of additional programs available.

***Students work towards the Teaching and Learning Policy aims by:***

- attending school in good health maintained by adequate diet, exercise and sleep
- attending school regularly, avoiding term time holidays
- being punctual and ready to begin lessons on time
- discussing matters which affect their happiness, progress and behaviour with their parents and/or teachers
- being organised – bringing necessary books, equipment, etc.

- conducting themselves in an orderly manner in the school
- taking growing responsibility for their own learning

***Parents work towards the Teaching and Learning Policy aims by:***

- ensuring that learners attend school in good health, regularly and punctually
- providing support for the discipline within the school and for the teacher’s role
- being realistic about their children’s abilities, offering encouragement and praise
- participating in discussions concerning their child’s progress and attainments
- ensuring early contact with the school to discuss matters which affect a child’s happiness, progress and behaviour
- giving due importance to independent study and home learning
- allowing their children to take increasing responsibility as they progress through their primary school years.

***Transdisciplinary Learning***

The preferred term to describe the PYP is transdisciplinary and in this context the meaning of the prefix “trans” is twofold: to convey learning that has relevance across the subject areas and more importantly, learning that transcends the confines of the subject areas to connect to what is real in the world. The PYP endorses a belief that students learn best when the learning is authentic and transdisciplinary – relevant to the real world – where the learning is not confined within the boundaries of traditional subject areas but is supported and enriched by them.

Resource: IB (2009) Making the PYP Happen

***Curriculum – Planning for Teaching and Learning***

The features that form the basis of the PYP are:

- the broad nature of study, including more than one language
- the flexibility of the programme’s curriculum model, enabling the adaptation and response to our local interests
- the education of the whole person
- developing citizens of the world – culture, language and learning together
- building and reinforcing learners’ sense of identity and cultural awareness
- fostering learners’ recognition and development of universal human values
- stimulating curiosity and inquiry in order to foster a spirit of discovery and enjoyment of learning
- equipping learners with the skills to learn and acquire knowledge, individually or collaboratively, and to apply these skills and knowledge accordingly across a broad range of areas
- providing international content while responding to local requirements and interests
- encouraging diversity and flexibility in pedagogical approaches
- providing appropriate forms of assessment and benchmarking.

The PYP is composed of three interrelated and equally important components. In keeping with the PYP commitment to inquiry, these three components are expressed in the form of the following three open-ended questions, each of which compels teachers to think deeply about their own practice with regard to student learning.

**What do we want to learn?**

**How best will we learn?**

## How will we know what we have learned?

### ***The Written Curriculum***

In the PYP a balance is sought between acquisition of essential knowledge and skills, development of conceptual understanding, demonstration of positive attitudes, and taking responsible action. In terms of achieving this balance, these five essential elements of the written curriculum are emphasised.

The PYP Programme of Inquiry (PoI) forms the basis of our learning. The PoI is made up of Units of Inquiry (UoI) which are taught at each year level. Each year level completes six UoI per year. UoI are concept driven, and related topics from different subject areas are chosen to link together as transdisciplinary units. The UoI are grouped together under the following transdisciplinary themes:

- Who we are
- How we express ourselves
- Where we are in place and time
- How the world works
- How we organise ourselves
- Sharing the planet

This transdisciplinary way of teaching and learning helps learners make connections, develop a sense of continuity during the day and caters for individual learning styles and interests. A transdisciplinary curriculum provides a powerful context within which learners can develop skills and understandings across the curriculum. This leads to an understanding of how things connect with one another.

### ***The 5 Elements of the PYP - Knowledge Concepts Skills Attitudes Actions***

When developing the PoI, PYP teachers must consider the 5 essential elements as follows:-

1. Knowledge- Significant, relevant content that we wish the learners to explore and know about, taking into consideration their prior experience and understanding.
2. Concepts- Powerful ideas that have relevance within the subject areas but also transcend them and that learners must explore and re-explore in order to develop a coherent, in-depth understanding.
3. Skills -Those capabilities that the learners need to demonstrate to succeed in a changing, challenging world, which may be disciplinary or transdisciplinary.
4. Attitudes -Dispositions that are expressions of fundamental values, beliefs and feelings about learning, the environment and people.
5. Actions- Demonstrations of deeper learning in responsible behaviour through responsible action; a manifestation in practice of the other essential elements.

### ***The Taught Curriculum***

The taught curriculum involves the methods teachers use to engage learners with the written curriculum. It is not only “what” learners will learn about but also “how” they will learn it that matters. PYP teachers are expected to constantly examine and improve the practices they use to actively involve learners in learning. Inquiry-based instruction and differentiation of instruction to meet individual learner needs are featured within the wide array of best practices employed by teachers at UPPS.

### ***Inquiry based learning***

The PYP provides an opportunity for learners to construct meaning, principally through concept-driven inquiry. Traditional academic subjects are part of the program but it emphasises the interrelatedness of knowledge and skills through a transdisciplinary program of inquiry. The most important premise of the PYP is that children learn through their own curiosity – and that is the school’s responsibility to



encourage them to be curious, to ask questions and to explore ways of finding the answers to their questions. This is called “inquiry based learning”, and it shapes our entire program. We teach learners through this approach to learning by:

- implementing inquiry based learning and the use of guiding questions across all areas of learning
- guiding learners in making connections between concepts and processes
- making learning purposeful, contextualised, challenging and inherently interesting.

In the inquiry based classroom there is increased emphasis on real life situations, decision-making, problem solving, research and action. Learners are actively:

- exploring, wondering and questioning
- experimenting and playing with possibilities
- making connections between previous learning and current learning
- making predictions and acting purposefully to see what happens
- collecting data and reporting findings
- clarifying existing ideas and reappraising perceptions of events
- deepening understanding through the application of a concept
- making and testing theories
- researching and seeking information
- taking and defending a position
- solving problems in a variety of ways.

### **Differentiation**

Differentiation involves teachers designing learning experiences that match learners’ readiness levels, learning styles and interests. All learners learn differently, and differentiation is how teachers react responsibly to different learning needs. Inquiry and differentiation are closely linked because both strive to actively engage learners in learning, provide learners with choices for their learning and help them construct new understandings.

At UPPS we believe that every learner should be challenged to grow in their skills, knowledge and understandings, moving beyond where they are at the beginning of the school year. Differentiation ensures that every learner demonstrates growth.

Differentiation can take many forms, some of which are more visible and others which are more subtle. Some of the key differentiation strategies include:

- providing learners with choices in how they learn and demonstrate their learning
- using assessment results to design learning experiences that meet individual learner’s needs
- learners working in small groups, with partners, and independently on learning tasks focused on their unique learning needs
- providing learners with alternative class work and home learning (not just more of the same work) that extends their learning of a specific skill or topic
- providing review and re-teaching for learners who need help in developing an important skill or concept
- open-ended learning tasks and questioning strategies that encourage the development of learners’ high-level thinking skills.

### **Collaborative Planning**

In order to plan for the diverse needs of learners, all UPPS teachers are required to engage in structured collaborative planning and reflection. Each planning team consists of all generalist teachers teaching learners within any particular year level, with involvement of specialist teachers as required.



Vertical planning will take place to revise and strengthen the articulation within the programme of inquiry. Planning for learning is based on the premises and beliefs that:

- There is no known ceiling to achievement. Intelligence can be developed by effective teaching.
- High expectations are important, but to fulfil these high expectations learners must be shown how to improve by their teachers. This requires learners to be taught to learn and to reflect on their learning, and to assess their progress.
- Learning objectives that challenge each learner and take their own learning forward must be shared explicitly with learners and reviewed at the end of the lesson or unit of learning.
- Lessons must be carefully planned and clearly structured to include an engaging and stimulating variety of learning experiences that contribute to meeting the learning objectives. Teachers must evaluate their lessons so that their own practice can improve.

## **Guidelines for Lesson Structure**

### **Start of the Lesson**

- The start of the lesson has a clear focus, using experiences which immediately engage the learner.
- The expected learning outcomes are shared with learners, in the context of prior learning to ensure they understand what they are doing and why
- The success criteria by which the learning will be evaluated are made explicit

### **Lesson Development**

- Present lessons with clarity, enthusiasm and pace, ensuring timings are clear and adhered to.
- Make learning active by providing experiences which enable learners to make meaning, construct knowledge and develop understanding and skills.
- Model learning and process, make their thinking and decision-making explicit to learners.
- Provide exemplar work so that learners are aware of the sophistication of response expected.
- Use a variety of questioning techniques to probe and develop learners' understanding.
- Promote active listening, inviting a range of different responses and building in time for reflection.
- Give constructive, positive feedback on work in progress.
- Provide opportunities for success for every learner
- Provide opportunities for progression which increase the level of conceptual challenge, the depth of understanding and the breadth of application of skills.
- Demonstrate flexibility in their approach and be prepared to deviate from the lesson plan where appropriate.
- Set a variety of home learning tasks to deepen, extend, or initiate learning.

### ***The Learned Curriculum***

The third question, "How will we know what we have learned?" represents the learned curriculum.

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teachers employ a variety of authentic assessment strategies (examples include: student presentations, portfolios, projects, written tasks, student self-reflections, peer reflections, conferences, interviews, demonstrations and many others) to find out if the learner learned what they were expected to learn.

Teachers and learners use the results of assessments to set goals for further learning and to think about ways to improve their teaching and learning strategies. Assessment at UPPS has a positive connotation since it focuses on what a learner can do at the current moment instead of on what they can't do.

**For learners – effective assessment:**

- supports learners learning by highlighting areas of strength and giving feedback to assist further growth
- provides learners with the opportunity to assess their own work and progress
- encourages learners to take pride in what they do
- give learners a sense of purpose
- make learners accountable.

**For teachers – effective assessment will:**

- find out what learners know and can do
- show how well learners can apply what they know
- measure learners' ability to inquire
- show what learners remember, and understand, of what has been taught, done, explored or discussed in class
- reveal areas in which learners are experiencing difficulties
- determine the interest level of learners
- help the teacher understand how individual learners think
- monitor learners' performance over a period of time
- provide data to support discussions with parents and colleagues about learner progress
- indicate how a learner is performing in comparison with others in the group
- help teachers evaluate whether learners are keeping pace with age-appropriate cognitive development.

*\*See the Assessment Policy for a more detailed outline on assessment expectations at UPPS*

**Single Subject Teaching and Learning**

At UPPS the single subject learning that is offered to students is:

- Languages – Japanese
- Physical Education
- Visual Art
- Music
- The Gardening Kitchen

Single subject teachers will make connections to at least one unit of inquiry at each year level.

Connections can be made through knowledge, key and related concepts, lines of inquiry, attributes of the learner profile, attitudes and skills. It is vital that the single subject is valued and therefore the single subject teacher/s must be involved in collaborative planning with the homeroom teachers during the unit of inquiry process. Single subject teachers must utilise the PYP curriculum model for all teaching and learning. They are to ensure that the five essential elements are embedded within their teaching and learning.

***Professional Learning***

UPPS is a learning community. We are therefore committed to support the learning needs of staff to ensure they have current and appropriate training to support the learning and curriculum needs of the school and its learners. In particular:

- Professional Learning will be organised to ensure the development of highly skilled, enthusiastic teachers who reflect on their practice in line with the PYP
- staff will undertake professional learning in line with the school's strategic plan

- staff will undergo appraisal to determine their personal professional learning needs
- teaching staff will regularly update their pedagogical skills to reflect contemporary education trends
- staff will draw upon expertise within the school through coaching, peer observation and mentoring.

### **Resources**

UPPS will endeavour to provide that:

- class sizes and resources are appropriate to the age of learners and areas of study
- learning spaces are appropriate for the diverse needs of learning and curriculum
- information and communication technologies are appropriate to support learning and teaching.

### **Related Policies and Statements:**

- Assessment & Reporting Policy
- Improving Student Learning Strategy

### **Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed annually by staff as part of the school's review cycle.

