

SCHOOL LANGUAGE POLICY

Rationale:

The purpose of this document is to inform and guide practice and curriculum in the classroom. This will help ensure that the school provides a global environment by where students become internationally minded and equipped to deal with the challenges that the 21st Century presents. Below, you will find information detailing our school's mission statement, language philosophy and practice of language within the school. This includes how we teach our primary language of instruction (English) and our language other than English (Mandarin). It also discusses how we foster the Mother Tongue (language spoken at home) of our students, of which there are approximately 37 in our school community.

Aims:

We are a school that strives to be internationally minded, our purpose is to provide a supportive, safe and dynamic learning environment. We promote inquiry, curiosity, creativity and individuality. We aim to develop a resilient, open-minded school community where all students become independent, emotionally intelligent and socially competent as they strive to achieve their potential as global citizens.

Language Instructional Program Implementation:

Language Profile:

As of 2021, Aspendale Gardens has a school population of approximately 641 students. There are approximately 37 mother tongue languages other than English. Other mother tongues include Indian, Russian, Chinese, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Italian, Greek and Spanish.

Language of Instruction:

English is the primary language of instruction at Aspendale Gardens Primary School. Consequently, all core curriculum areas and Units of Inquiry are written and presented in English. As a government run Victorian school, we have to rigorously follow and integrate the Victorian curriculum into the Primary Years Programme (PYP). Consequently, our English curriculum is built around three interrelated strands (Language, Literature and Literacy) that are incorporated under each of the three main areas, 'Reading and Viewing', 'Writing' and 'Speaking and Listening'.

English instruction is teacher guided and student centred. Students are explicitly taught skills and strategies to suit their individual needs and to become proficient users of English in all aspects of their daily lives. Teachers observe students' ability to demonstrate and apply these skills by looking at what they say, make, do or write through authentic inquiry experiences.

English instruction aims to teach students to:

- 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.
- 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 and facilitate interaction with others.

Reading Instruction

At Apsendale Gardens Primary School we believe:

- Reading allows the ability to construct meaning from texts and other mediums. This provides a gateway to investigate the world around us.
- Reading is paramount to becoming a skilled and proficient member of society.
- Reading helps develop a sense of self and opens the doorway to explore and fulfil our aspirations.
- Reading facilitates learning across disciplines allowing an authentic transdisciplinary approach.

Apsendale Gardens teachers use the Daily 5 model. This incorporates the teaching of research based strategies that cover the key areas of comprehension, accuracy, fluency and expanding vocabulary. Teachers conduct short, explicit whole class focus sessions that are followed by student driven activities. These allow rich opportunities for students to peer coach and assists students to move to a higher level of understanding. One on one conferences with the classroom teacher provide further occasion to differentiate learning based on need. Texts selected for teacher instruction are influenced by the current Unit of Inquiry. A variety of books that are linked to the unit and that are levelled at the students' capabilities are also readily available in classroom libraries.

Writing Instruction

At Apsendale Gardens Primary School we believe:

- Writing is a life skill that enables students to communicate and express themselves.
- Writing is an essential transdisciplinary skill that appears in every aspect of the curriculum and that facilitates students to research and delve into the modern era.
- Writing is a partnership with reading and listening and speaking, that is essential to constructing and communicating meaning.
- That students are successful at writing when students have a positive and stimulating environment where all writing tasks are seen as real and purposeful and the teacher provides *support* through explicit teaching.

To be effective writers, we ensure that students participate in multiple writing activities daily. These opportunities are mainly provided through the current PYP Unit of Inquiry. When no link can be made, separate stand-alone PYP planners are used.

As prescribed by the Victorian curriculum, teachers develop student knowledge of several text types including recounts, narratives, poems, information reports and text analysis. Progressive skills are taught to students as they advance through the year levels and are scaffolded through the use of the 7 Steps to Writing Success model and the SMART Spelling Program.

Speaking and Listening

At Apsendale Gardens Primary School we:

- Understand that English is one of many languages spoken in Australia and that different languages may be spoken by family, classmates and community.
- Believe that language can be used to explore ways of expressing needs, sharing feelings and thoughts.
- Believe that listening is a vital skill that teaches necessary and effective strategies for dialogue and discussion in a range of familiar and new concepts.

Students have many opportunities to refine and practise their speaking and listening skills through our Units of Inquiry. These include but are not limited to oral presentations, peer feedback, self-reflections and discovery time. Teachers use Victorian Curriculum as a guide to teach explicit skills that need to be taught in addition to the Learner Profile and the Transdisciplinary Skill of 'Communication'.

Language and Technology Integration

We are aware that we are in a technological age and as such technology is a vital component of language instruction and an invaluable tool to discover and connect students with the wider world. Years 4 -6 are part of the Bring Your Own Device program (BYOD), while the younger years have access to both laptops, i-Pads and desktop computers. We are an e-Smart school and consequently we have put in place a series of cultural change interventions that are aimed at creating positive and inclusive cultures that increase online safety.

Students have the opportunity to:

- Research information to support the units of inquiry
- Create information portals (such as websites) to demonstrate knowledge of the Central Idea.
- Sort out key information relevant to their current unit and then transfer and present information through various applications such as Popplet, PowerPoint and Word.
- Use online applications to create class assessments and reflect and evaluate their own and others work.
- Use web/video-based communication to connect with other schools and communities around the world.

Supporting Mother Tongue

Aspendale Gardens Primary School has a diverse community with approximately 37 languages other than English spoken at home. In order to support these students, we provide texts in the library of the 5 most common spoken languages. These include Greek, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Khmer.

Students who come to the school at any year level with no English language are advised to go to the English Language School in Noble Park for six months before entering into our system. This provides them with the necessary skills to be successful and integrate fully into our school community.

Mandarin Language Instruction

We understand the importance of embracing other cultures and languages and pride ourselves on our Mandarin program and consequent Asia connections. All students from Foundation to Year 6 partake in one hour of Mandarin instruction per week by a qualified Language teacher. These lessons, where possible, connect to students Central Ideas and Lines of Inquiry, whilst still ensuring essential basic language instruction occurs. The importance of it not just being an isolated subject but integrated into the general classroom is addressed by teachers conversing with students in Mandarin regarding everyday questions and observations. For example, students may have to ask to go to the bathroom in Mandarin or the teacher may ask students to pack away or get out their lunch. Teachers are skilled in these short sentences and questions by weekly Mandarin sessions in morning briefings.

We currently have three sister schools in China who can connect to the school through SKYPE. This fosters world relationships and aids students on their road to becoming internationally minded.

Library/Media

Our school library is an essential component to language instruction at AGPS and the running of the PYP. Our increasing inventory of fiction and non-fiction texts that correlate to our Programme of Inquiry ensure that students have a rich array of information at their disposal. This is in addition to our vast array of engaging texts. The library also houses our computer lab, allowing students additional access to research and the opportunity to publish findings.

Parent Involvement

We believe language instruction needs to be in partnership with parents and the wider community. Parents are invited to two conferences in the year with the classroom teacher to foster skills and discuss materials that are needed to support the child at home. In addition, parents are encouraged to volunteer and help with the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program.

Parents are requested to encourage reading at home in addition to tasks that need to be completed for the current inquiry.

At the start of each new Unit of Inquiry, a request is sent to see if a parent or friend is an 'expert' in the field that the students are investigating. If so, information is shared through presentations/demonstrations with the whole year level.

Professional Development

Professional development (PD) is an essential factor in ensuring a rigorous language program at AGPS.

Specified budgets allow on-site and off-site PD in the areas of Reading, Writing, Inquiry and Student Wellbeing. PYP workshops are held regularly to ensure that all staff are adequately trained and skilled to deliver the program successfully. All staff are involved in the Victorian PYP Network, where they attend Teach Meets to share ideas and skills with other PYP schools. Teachers are also provided opportunities to visit other like schools in the area.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the school's review cycle and be passed by the School Council Board.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in March 2022.