

Aitken College

Curriculum Statement 2010

Aitken College is a school of the Uniting Church in Australia, serving families in the outer northern suburbs of Melbourne.

The College, which opened in 1999 on a 45-acre site in Greenvale, is co-educational, offering classes at Primary and Secondary levels (P-12) to students of all faiths and denominations. Fees are maintained at the lowest possible level to allow open access.

Aitken College provides an environment in which creativity is nurtured and academic endeavour is encouraged and acknowledged.

The College strives to establish and maintain a close relationship between students, staff and parents and welcomes the benefits that flow from the active involvement of parents.

The College places great value on the skill and dedication of its teaching staff and supports them fully through appropriate professional development and other related activities. Aitken College has highly qualified and enthusiastic staff who are prepared to make a deep commitment to the welfare of students.

Aitken College fosters a love of learning which will take students beyond the confines of the classroom and provide them with skills for living. We wish to create a caring community in which kindness, respect for others, self-respect, honesty and self-discipline are valued and emphasised.

Vision

The vision for Aitken College is to develop and support a learning community of students, staff and their families in a faith partnership with the Uniting Church in Australia.

Mission

Building on a foundation of Christian values, the mission of Aitken College is to enable students to become informed and compassionate members of the wider community by inspiring academic achievement and creativity, nurturing self worth, encouraging environmental responsibility and committing to service with and for others.

Aims

Aitken College will aim to:

1. Make the Christian faith relevant through an understanding of its major teachings and by encouraging a personal faith journey.
2. Inspire and challenge students to realise their intellectual potential and equip them for lifelong learning.
3. Promote and develop creativity and self expression.
4. Enable each student to realise their self worth in a safe, healthy and happy environment that responds to personal and community needs.
5. Encourage individuals and the community to take responsibility for the environment and to act accordingly.
6. Instil in students a sense of service and concern for the needs of others.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The College curriculum emphasises the development and refinement of literacy and numeracy skills, which are seen as essential if students are to adapt to change and participate fully in an increasingly complex social and economic environment. Students must have the ability to communicate ideas, develop thoughts and make sense of their society.

The College actively promotes, through its Religious Education program, and in many other ways, a values system based on tolerance and respect for others, reverence for life and the development of personal honesty and integrity. It creates an environment in which students may develop an understanding of the moral values and philosophies arising from the Gospel and the traditions of the Christian church.

Aitken College aims to stimulate and nurture creativity in its many forms through the programs and activities that are offered and is committed to providing challenging and relevant learning activities for its students. Each student is encouraged to think logically and to use creative approaches to problem solving. The ability to work independently or as part of a team is developed through a range of suitable activities.

Research skills, which involve information retrieval, analysis and synthesis, are an integral part of the curriculum at all levels. Students are given the means to obtain information from a variety of sources, including electronic resources such as the Internet, and are encouraged to look critically at this information.

The College supports and rewards academic achievement across the subject disciplines and encourages students to deal constructively with strengths and weaknesses in achieving their maximum potential.

Aitken College provides each student with activities which promote self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. All students are allowed opportunities for the development of leadership skills within the school and through involvement in community activities.

A non-selective, low-fee structure ensures access to co-educational Christian education for families from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds.

The following Central Principles were developed by College Staff:

1. The classroom environment should be stimulating, safe and encouraging.
2. Inquiry and participation are central to the development of independent learners.
3. Mutual respect between teachers and students fosters academic, social and personal growth.
4. Teachers and students share a responsibility to help create a positive, productive and nurturing environment.
5. Teachers will be professional, showing patience, enthusiasm and fairness, and should have clear and realistic expectations.
6. All students will be encouraged to aim high and not be discouraged from achieving their full potential.

STRUCTURE

The College is divided into the following schools, named after some of the original pastoral leases in the local area:

Fairview	(Prep - Year 2)
Cumberland	(Years 3 - 5)
Dunhelen	(Years 6 & 7)
Glenarthur	(Years 8 & 9)
Brookhill	(Years 10 - 12)

Fairview and Cumberland: Curriculum

A broad general curriculum is offered, with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy.

The Learning areas are English, Mathematics, Integrated Studies, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Physical Education/Health, Lifeskills, Religious and Values Education and Technology. Specialist teaching is provided in Performing Arts, Library (including the use of Information Technology), Visual Arts, RVE and Physical Education.

Classes are run on the basis of five daily one-hour blocks of time, with one block allocated each week to Chapel and School Assembly. Homeroom teachers are encouraged to use the two-hour blocks of time flexibly to allow multi-disciplinary activities and integrated approaches.

English includes reading, writing, speaking and listening. Activities are based on the Early Years Literacy Program in Years P-4. Spelling and grammar are specifically taught in Years 1 to 5.

Information Technology focuses on the acquisition of basic skills, the use of on-line resources and methods of accessing information. Classes are held in the Library and in the primary ICT classroom. One hour per week is spent in the Library in Years P– 2 and two periods in Years 3 – 5. Software appropriate for these levels is used.

Students in Prep to Year Two participate in a Perceptual Motor Program.

Preparatory Year: Time Allocation

SUBJECT	Hours (per 10 day cycle)
English	16
Mathematics	12
Performing Arts inc. Music	1
Creative Arts	2
Integrated Studies	6
Perceptual Motor Program	2
Library / Info. Tech.	4
Physical Education	2
Chapel / Assembly	2
Religious Education	1
Lifeskills	2

Years 1 and 2: Time Allocation

SUBJECT	Hours (per 10 day cycle)
English	14
Mathematics	12
Performing Arts inc. Music	2
Creative Arts	2
Integrated Studies	7

Library / Info. Tech.	4
PMP	1
Physical Education	2
Chapel / Assembly	2
Religious Education	2
Lifeskills	2

Years 3 and 4: Time Allocation

SUBJECT	Hours (per 10 day cycle)
English	14
Mathematics	10
Integrated Studies	8
Physical Education	2
Lifeskills	2
Religious Education	2
Assembly / Chapel	2
Performing Arts inc. Music	2
Creative Arts	2
Library / Info. Tech.	4
Activities	2

Note: Students in Year 3 study violin (small group tuition) for one hour per week in either semester one or semester two. Integrated studies time is reduced.

Year 5: Time Allocation

SUBJECT	Hours (per 10 day cycle)
English	14
Mathematics	10
Integrated Studies	6
Physical Education	2
Lifeskills	1
Religious Education	2
Assembly / Chapel	2
Performing Arts inc. Music	2
Creative Arts	2
Library / Info. Tech.	3
Activities /Sport	4
Science	2

SUBJECT OUTLINES : Years Prep - 5

English

English includes the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening. The conventions of language usage are applied - pronunciation, punctuation, grammar, spelling and handwriting. The English program includes one scheduled period in the Library per week.

Mathematics

Children are led to think mathematically about the real world through the areas of number, space, measurement and chance & data. Skills developed include accurate calculation, problem solving, estimation, classification, measurement, order and spatial relations.

Integrated Studies

These activities may involve aspects of all the key learning areas, including Studies of Society and the Environment, Science, Technology and Health in manageable units, each with a central theme. One hour per week is scheduled in the IT laboratory and this time is used to access on-line materials to support each unit..

Performing Arts

A cross-arts program that provides the opportunity for children to become competent in the following musical activities: singing, playing, moving, inventing and listening to music.

Religious Education

A Christian Religious Education program is provided which is consistent with the guidelines provided by the Uniting Church in Australia.

Health and Physical Education

This learning area includes a variety of mostly non-competitive activities, a swimming and water safety program, gymnastics, ball games and skill development activities. Additional Health issues are covered through the Lifeskills program and some of the thematic units at each year level. Students in Years Prep to Two participate in the Perceptual Motor Program (PMP).

Dunhelen (Years 6 and 7): Curriculum

Classes are timetabled on the basis of 50 one-hour periods per ten-day cycle. Year Six students follow a program that helps them make a smooth transition into the secondary years.

The class teacher at Year Six teaches the class for several different subject areas. Specialist teachers may cover Mathematics, Religious Education, Art, Music and

Physical Education. Students in Year 6 are, therefore, exposed to the demands of secondary schooling within a supportive framework. Specialist teachers are able to enhance the range of experiences for Year 6 students, allowing a smooth transition into the secondary school.

A strong core curriculum maintains the emphasis on literacy and numeracy.

At Year Seven, more time is allocated to Science and the Humanities and Indonesian language is introduced. The homeroom teacher usually teaches several different subjects (including Lifeskills). An information Technology component is integrated with English at this level.

Year 6 Time Allocation:

Subject	Hours (per 10 day cycle)
English	9
Mathematics	8
Integrated Studies	7
Health / Physical Education	3
Science	5
Technology & Info Tech.	2
Drama	2
Chapel / Assembly	2
Religious Education	2
Activities / Sport	2
Visual Arts	4
Lifeskills	2
Music	2

Year 7 Time Allocation:

Subject	Hours (per 10 day cycle)
English	8
Mathematics	7
Science	7
Visual Arts	3
Music	2
Drama	2
LOTE (Indonesian)	5
Humanities	6
Physical Education	4
Religious Education	2
Chapel / Assembly	2
Lifeskills	2

Glenarthur: Curriculum

Elective subjects are introduced for the first time in Years Eight and Nine. Electives in Year Eight include Music, Art, Information Technology, Visual Communication and Design, Design and Technology, Music Technology, Media and Drama.

Elective subjects at Year 9 include Writers Workshop, Computer Programming, Computer Modelling and Commerce, as well as the subjects listed above.

Year 8 Time Allocation:

Subject	Hours (per 10 day cycle)	Electives
English	7	<i>Students choose four from the list below. (Two per semester.)</i>
Mathematics	7	
Science	6	
LOTE	5	
Humanities	6	
Physical Ed / Health	3	
Religious Education	2	
Chapel / Assembly	2	
Elective A	5	
Elective B	5	
Lifeskills	2	
		<i>Music</i>
		<i>Music Technology</i>
		<i>Information Technology</i>
		<i>Visual Comm & Design</i>
		<i>Design and Technology</i>
		<i>Drama</i>
		<i>Media</i>

Year 9 Time Allocation:

SUBJECT	Hours (Per 10 day cycle)	ELECTIVES
English	6.75	<i>Students choose four from the list below. (Two per semester)</i>
Mathematics	6.75	
Science	6.75	
Humanities	5.75	
Religious Education	2	
Chapel / Assembly	2	
Physical Education	3	
LOTE (Indonesian)	5	
Lifeskills	2	
Elective 1	5	
Elective 2	5	
		<i>Commerce</i>
		<i>Computer Modelling</i>
		<i>Computer Programming</i>
		<i>Drama I and II</i>
		<i>Information Technology</i>
		<i>Music I and II</i>
		<i>Technology</i>
		<i>Visual Comm & Design</i>
		<i>Writing Workshop</i>

Brookhill: Curriculum

The Senior School curriculum allows students increased subject choice. Year 10 students have the option of selecting from a limited range of VCE subjects if their academic progress is satisfactory. A wider range of electives is offered, as shown below. The Religious Education program at Year 10 consists of Unit 1 of VCE Texts and Traditions. The Lifeskills program is integrated with Physical Education at this level.

Year 10 Time Allocation:

SUBJECT	Hours (per 10 day cycle)	ELECTIVES
<i>Core subjects</i>		<i>Students choose four from the list below. (Two per semester)</i> Art Commerce Computer Programming Computer Modelling Drama I and II Environmental Science Information Technology LOTE (Indonesian) Music I and II Photography Technology Visual Comm. & Design VCE subject
English	7	
Mathematics	7	
Science	7	
Humanities	6	
Religious Education	3	
Chapel / Assembly	2	
Physical Education	4	
<i>Electives</i>		
Elective 1	7	
Elective 2	7	

Year 11 and 12 Time Allocation:

Students in Years 11 and 12 complete either the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) or the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) as prescribed by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA).

The College offers as broad a range of VCE studies as possible. The structure of the two-year course is described fully in the VCE administrative handbook.

Students generally study 6 subjects (12 units) in Year 11. Each subject is allocated 7 one-hour periods per cycle. Year 12 students study 5 subjects, and each subject is allocated 8 one-hour periods per cycle.

VCAL students study one or more VET subjects as part of their course. Full details of course requirements are provided in the VCAL handbook.

Year 11 (VCE) Time Allocation:

SUBJECT	Hours (per 10 day cycle)
Elective subjects (×6)	42
Assembly / Chapel	2
Lifeskills	2
Supervised Private Study	4

Year 12(VCE) Time Allocation:

SUBJECT	Hours (per 10 day cycle)
Elective subjects (×5)	40
Assembly / Chapel	2
Lifeskills	2
Supervised Private Study	6

SUBJECT OUTLINES: YEARS 6 –10

Subjects in Years 6 – 12 are organised into the following faculty areas:

English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Commerce, Creative Arts, Performing Arts, Religious and Values Education, Lifeskills, Technology, Information Technology, Physical Education/Health and Languages other than English (LOTE).

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) and elements of CSF(II) provide the basic structure for courses at Years 6 –10.

English

The elements of English are: grammar and the structure of language, speaking and listening, creative writing, oral English and written comprehension. The students study set texts at each year level and are encouraged to become involved in debating and public speaking activities.

Mathematics

Mathematics courses in Years 6 - 10 cover the 5 dimensions outlined in the VELs, i.e. Space, Number, Measurement, Chance and Data Working Mathematically and Structure. Emphasis is given in Years 6 and 7 to the Number strand. Problem-solving tasks and projects are an important part of activities at all levels.

Science

The goals, methods and content of courses in Science are chosen to provide for all students, not just for intending scientists. The broad aims of the programs at this level are to increase students' knowledge of themselves and their environment and to provide models for the management of the Earth's resources for practical human purposes. Programs draw on all of the main scientific disciplines and focus on the

scientific method and its implications. The social and environmental consequences of advances in Science and Technology are carefully considered.

Humanities

History and Geography form the core curriculum at Years 6 - 10. The study of the past is seen as an important way of contributing to students' sense of identity and heritage. The study of the Geography, customs and culture of other countries allows students to develop a clear view of their position in a global community. History covers Ancient, Medieval, Australian, Asian and European history to the present, thus preparing students for VCE studies. Geography covers local, regional and Australian geography, including the geography of our Asian neighbours and the world powers.

Health and Physical Education

Students are encouraged to develop a healthy, active lifestyle. The theory and practical work are integrated, emphasising the connection between exercise and good health. Students also have the opportunity to develop skills in a wide range of team and individual sports. The P.E. program is complemented by sporting and recreational activities such as Swimming and Athletics sports days and the Aitken College cross-country run.

LOTE (Indonesian)

Learning another language takes students beyond the confines of their own culture and challenges them to reconsider what have become accepted patterns of thought by the single use of the English language. LOTE courses integrate language learning with a study of the culture and customs of Indonesia and its neighbours.

Creative Arts

Students produce work in a wide range of different media, including sculpture and mixed media work. They examine the work of other artists and begin to develop the ability to analyse artworks.

Performing Arts

Music and Drama form part of the compulsory program in Years 6 and 7. Students study music theory and appreciation and have the opportunity to participate in the instrumental music program. The Drama course focuses on development of self-confidence and the ability to express ideas and emotions.

Religious Education

The Religious Education program is integrated with the weekly Chapel service and aims to provide students with a values system as they move into the wider community. Students are encouraged to ask questions and think about life-related issues such as relationships, justice issues, the environment and a range of social issues.

ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

Assessment at Aitken College is based on goals and the work that students must do to meet those goals. Teachers will establish clear expectations about the nature of the learning to be undertaken and the ways that it will be assessed. Often this will involve the student in setting attainable goals.

Assessment also focuses on what students have achieved and how they can improve their performance. Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning, which identifies strengths and weaknesses, and is a continuous process as students work towards well-defined goals.

Teachers use a wide range of techniques to collect information on student learning. These include performances such as debates, talks and demonstrations, tests or examinations, writing, work samples, student files and diaries, portfolios and anecdotal records and observations of classroom activities.

The aims of our assessment practices are:

- (i) to provide students with accurate information on their present stage of development, their strengths and limitations and their achievements to date.
- (ii) to provide parents with valid and reliable indicators of students' development and progress.
- (iii) to provide information about what skills have been mastered, what has been learned and what learning experiences have been provided as part of the course of study.
- (iv) to provide information which will be used to assess the effectiveness of the teaching and learning programs.

Assessment procedures are documented in the Assessment Programs (Years 6 to 10) and in the Course Descriptions (all year levels). Assessment programs are revised and updated regularly.

Reporting Details

Reporting practices include a formal mid-year and end-of-year student report, an interim report in Term One (Years Six to Twelve only), parent-teacher interviews in Terms One and Three (all year levels) and informal meetings between parents, teachers and the relevant Head of School or Homeroom Teacher that may be arranged to discuss particular issues.

Interim Reports are used to highlight any areas of concern prior to the parent-teacher interviews, which are held in Term One. Subject teachers give a preliminary indication of academic performance (high, medium or low) and effort (satisfactory, borderline or unsatisfactory). They also use the Interim Report to request interviews with parents.

Formal end-of-semester reports in Years Prep to Five describe student progress using the following scale:

Grade	Descriptor
1	Considerably above the standard expected at this time of the year
2	Above the standard expected at this time of the year
3	At the standard expected at this time of the year
4	Below the standard expected at this time of the year
5	Significantly below the standard expected at this time of the year

All student reports in Years Six to Eleven contain a brief description of the subject content, and a series of assessment areas which are graded using a ten point (A+ to E) scale. An overall grade is also provided for each subject. Details of the weighting used to derive the overall grade are contained in the Assessment Program. Reports at these levels also contain a comment from the relevant subject teacher. A similar format is used at Year Twelve; however, no overall grade is given. The assessment areas are usually the outcomes listed in the relevant VCE study design. Year Twelve students receive a report using this format in Semester One only. Outcomes on this report are graded as S or N only.

Interim reports may also be used when requested by parents or subject teachers i.e. where there is concern about a student's progress, level of application or behaviour.

Student diaries are an important channel of communication between parents and the classroom teacher, and samples of student work may be available for discussion at parent-teacher interviews where this is practical.

The College acknowledges the need for an honest appraisal of a student's achievements and is mindful of the requirement for constructive, non-judgemental comments in reporting.

Reporting Guidelines

Reporting will:

- reflect the aims of assessment and clearly communicate the achievements of students as they are related to the goals of the learning program
- provide constructive feedback, which will assist understanding and further growth. The language used will be constructive and will avoid detrimental statements about the student

- encourage cooperation and open communication between parents, teachers and the student with the aim of encouraging the student to take responsibility for his or her own learning
- be a confidential communication between teacher, student and parents
- be in language which is clear and appropriate for the intended purpose
- employ a variety of different procedures and take place regularly.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching methodologies and strategies used at Aitken College recognise the need to cater for the variety of learning styles and preferences which students have. The College therefore emphasises varied delivery systems with a high level of interaction between students and teachers. Learning programs are structured so that they provide experiences from each of the different learning styles or modalities. Units of work usually offer a range of tasks, which will appeal to visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and technological learners.

Teachers are encouraged to provide activities that involve all of the levels of thinking outlined in Bloom's Taxonomy, rather than focussing primarily on knowledge and comprehension. Thus, teaching styles are designed to foster collaboration and empowerment of students and teachers and the creative exploration of subject matter at all levels.

Problem solving skills and the ability to work as a part of a team are developed through open-ended activities and exercises.

The use of appropriate technology is seen as an integral part of teaching and learning. Computers (with suitable software packages) are used in routine classroom applications and in the acquisition and development of problem solving skills.

The following Central Principles to guide teaching and learning strategies were developed by staff:

- Effective teaching strategies take into consideration the planning, implementing and assessing of programs for individual students and their learning styles.
- Teachers must provide clear and realistic expectations for lesson content, behaviour and assessment.

- Quality teaching strategies should allow the students to be involved and interact in their learning, through the provision of a variety of teaching and learning techniques which challenge and motivate.

Effective techniques might include:

- open ended questions
- humour
- analogies / metaphors
- constructive feedback
- drawing on children's experience
- flexibility
- problem solving
- hands on activities
- discussions
- fun

Some of the strategies to be used are:

- group activities such as practical work in Science
- individual guided research
- hands-on activities which utilise the opportunities presented by the large rural site
- audio-visual presentations
- student produced multi-media presentations
- lecture style classes
- discussions
- thematic approaches such as the use of music in presentations in other subject areas
- short talks and presentations by students
- role-plays
- construction of models, dioramas etc.

CATERING FOR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

The provision of open-ended tasks and the emphasis on student-centred learning provides opportunities for the extension of able students and for the development of thinking skills. The Head of Special Programs works in collaboration with class and subject teachers to devise suitable courses of study for students with special needs. The progress of gifted students is monitored as they move through the school to ensure that adequate curriculum provision is made for them. Various methods are used according to the social, emotional and intellectual needs of the student. These may involve advancement to higher year levels in one or more learning areas, the provision

of enrichment or extension materials by the class teacher or student-centred tasks based on individual research and appropriate small group work.

Individual or small group tuition by trained special education teachers is available for students experiencing difficulties in the classroom. This service is available to students at all year levels, but is concentrated on the early years, where research has shown that intervention greatly increases the effectiveness of additional assistance. These programs have the aim of helping children to acquire the skills and patterns of learning, which will allow them to move back into the regular classroom.

A wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities complements the academic programs at the College.

These include:

- debates and debating competitions
- choirs and ensemble groups
- musical productions and concerts
- Science field trips and family science evenings
- Science Talent Search
- Australian Maths Competition
- Camps and Excursions
- Activities program for Years 3 - 5
- sports days
- drama productions

PROCESSES FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND RENEWAL

Work and Assessment programs are continuously modified and improved and are subject to an annual review. This process of review takes place at faculty level in the secondary school, and within schools at primary level.

Faculties undertake a major review of their programs on a three to five year basis, although there is no prescribed time-frame for this process. The catalyst for this review process is often an external curriculum directive such as the introduction of the Essential Learning Standards or the CSF (II), but change also comes from a re-evaluation of student needs and their subject choices in the Senior School. New electives have been introduced at middle school level in almost every year of the college's operation.

Course descriptions are developed using a set format, which ensures the integration of information technology where it is relevant.

Units of work should involve, where practical:

- integrated use of information technology
- provision of open-ended and challenging activities, which cater for a range of learning styles
- tasks which draw on each level of Bloom's Taxonomy
- some student involvement in the choice of activities
- clear assessment goals.

The Director of Teaching and Learning is responsible for the provision of access to appropriate Professional Development activities for staff. Academic staff are involved in a cyclic Professional Learning Review which focuses on personal career planning and the accompanying professional development issues.

The following Central Principles related to Professional Skills were developed by College staff:

- Teachers should use a variety of teaching strategies to motivate student learning.
- Teachers should know their students and develop programs to meet their individual needs.
- Teachers should undertake regular professional development which enhances their professional skills including subject knowledge and pedagogical techniques.
- Teachers must strive to foster a positive, focused, safe and disciplined learning environment.
- Teachers must strive to encourage deeper thinking and provide opportunities for students to engage in problem solving. The aim is to develop thinking skills, that provide the foundation for life-long learning.
- Teachers should be involved in networking, mentoring and peer support programs to support further learning.