



PENLEIGH AND ESSENDON GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Individual needs policy

Rationale

Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School is dedicated to the provision of an academic curriculum and a broad co-curricular programme which encourages in each student the development of intellectual curiosity, respect for the tradition of scholarship, the realisation of his or her artistic and recreational potential and the practice of Christian values. All students have the right to enriching experiences that prepare them for life in an inclusive society in which they can achieve success commensurate with their potential and every school has a responsibility to provide its students with educational experiences appropriate to their needs. In this context, the special requirements of the student with individual needs are acknowledged, his or her progress is monitored and the student is actively encouraged to develop further according to his or her potential.

Collection of information

As a first step towards acknowledging the individual needs of students, the school acts to collect information about a student as early as possible during the process of enrolment and stores and distributes information to staff as applicable to support provision of learning experiences appropriate to the student. This information may be evidence about a student's outstanding potential and / or about factors likely to inhibit participation. Information requested from the student's parent or guardian includes available assessment and documentation provided by an appropriate professional consultant. This will support the identification of the student's need and can offer advice concerning management practices.

Curriculum practice statement

PEGS offers a broad and inclusive programme that engages and challenges students at every level. In this context all students are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities and pursue interests in depth, to employ higher order thinking skills and capitalise on capacities for creative thinking.

The school day is a busy one in every section of the school. In the primary school classroom, general studies, Chinese language studies, a comprehensive programme in the visual and performing arts, including music and drama, physical education

and computer literacy are important components of the curriculum that encourage children to embrace broad and enriching learning experiences, to think deeply and to respond creatively. During literacy and mathematics sessions, children work in small, flexible, ability-based groupings so that they can progress at individual rates. The secondary school curriculum emphasises the development of academic goals. Beginning in Year Seven this focus includes the compulsory study of two Languages (other than English), music, drama, art, in addition to core studies in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, religion and physical education. Additional electives are introduced in Years Eight to Ten and students with sufficient background have the opportunity to commence accelerated VCE studies in one selected subject in Year Ten. Participation in extension activities in mathematics such as Maths Olympiad, enrichment activities such as the Maths Talent Quest and Maths Games Days, group activities such as the Tournament of Minds and the CSIRO Scientists in Schools Programme also offer opportunities for academic extension.

The school's physical education and outdoor education programmes, together with participation in the AGSV and AGSV/APS competitions for boys and girls respectively, encourage the development of psychomotor abilities and leadership skills. Additional opportunities for personal growth and community participation are provided by the Year Nine Programme in which all students participate.

Gifted and talented students

Educational experiences should take into account the significantly advanced skills or potential for exceptional achievement which are possessed by some students. Such prospects frequently define children who are described as 'gifted' or 'talented'. Gifted students have the potential to show significantly advanced skills in one or more developmental domains. This is the case whether or not students are already expressing that potential in advanced achievements. The term 'talented' is applied to performance that is distinctly above average in one or more fields. Personal and environmental circumstances can facilitate or impede the translation of potential into performance.

Developmental domains in which exceptional potential might exist are commonly identified as:

- General intelligence
- Specific academic areas
- Visual and performing arts
- Psychomotor ability
- Leadership
- Creative thinking
- Interpersonal and intra-personal skills.

(Parliament of Australia: Senate: Committee: Report on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children, 2001)

Curriculum practice for gifted and talented students

Opportunities for extension are intrinsic to learning at PEGS and the gifted student is ready to benefit in such situations. Aside from the concession of VCE studies in one subject in Year Ten, acceleration of a student beyond his or her age cohort may be considered in only very exceptional circumstances at PEGS. Extension within the classroom rather than formal acceleration is our usual practice. The following reasons are offered in support of this policy:

- learning should not be considered a simple sequential progression as may be assumed when acceleration is advocated broadly;
- developmental aspects of learning should not be ignored;
- extension within the classroom allows students to benefit from working in groups with physically and emotionally compatible others;
- the significance of social interaction with peers is given its due consideration;
- acceleration presumes that children learn best within a group of roughly uniform ability and ignores the collective positive outcomes of learning within mixed ability groups.

Students whose participation is limited as a consequence of illness, disability or developmental delay

For some students educational experiences require acknowledgement of individual needs which may affect access to opportunities to learn, whether illness, disability or developmental delay. The **Disability Discrimination Act 1992** and **Disability Standards for Education 2005** define disability (refer to Appendix) and, together with the **Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010**, enshrine the rights of students with disabilities to an education tailored to their needs. Disability Standards for Education clarify and make more explicit the obligations of schools and all education and training providers under the Disability Discrimination Act and the rights of people with disabilities in relation to education and training.

The Standards address the following aspects of the obligations of schools and the rights of students and parents:

- Making reasonable adjustments
- Enrolment standards
- Participation standards
- Standards for curriculum development, accreditation and delivery
- Student support services
- Harassment and victimisation
- Treatment of a person who has an associate with a disability.

Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School acknowledges the importance of this legislation and asserts the school's determination to fulfil its obligations to its students.

Conditions inhibiting participation and progress and requiring adjustment for the student may occur as a consequence of a disability described by the following categories:

- Sensory
- Physical
- Cognitive
- Social/emotional.

Curriculum practice for students with a disability

For the student with a disability the focus is on what he or she needs to know for success in the future. Upon enrolment of a student with a disability or upon identification of individual needs for a student already enrolled, the following steps are taken:

1. Consultation with student/parents to ensure that a reasonable adjustment is agreed upon and implemented in a timely fashion.

2. Establishment of a Programme Support Group (PSG) in which the parent and student participate and where an Individual Education Plan is negotiated to provide the adjustments required to comply with the student's individual needs.
3. Documentation of all PSG meetings and accurate records of all outcomes and adjustments agreed upon are kept.

NOTE

- A **reasonable** adjustment may not be the one preferred by the student or his/her parents but must be justifiable and supported by the school with valid reasons.
- Individual programme modification may be applied for students who meet the criteria for inclusion in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) but is not restricted to this group.

Access to the curriculum

Reasonable adjustments to support access to the curriculum may include but are not restricted to:

- Reasonable modification of the physical environment to allow access to learning facilities
- Reasonable adjustments to allow access to student services within the school environment
- Additional support in the classroom, provided by the subject teacher and sometimes by an integration aide or a teaching assistant
- Individual support, often provided by the subject teacher or special education staff
- Modification of the curriculum, including adjustment to the number of subjects studied and course content, in accordance with the long term goals established for the student by the Programme Support Group and documented in an Individual Education Plan
- Modification of assessment tasks
- Special arrangements for examinations

Co-curricular opportunities for students with individual needs

The co-curricular programme provides for all students the opportunity to associate with fellow students across a range of ages and who possess similar interests. Participants benefit from working with experienced and specialist staff in activities including music ensembles, dance and drama workshops and productions, representative sporting teams, debating and chess clubs. Students with individual needs are encouraged to contribute to these activities and to participate in social justice activities, student leadership groups, student publications and other extra-curricular aspects of school life. Students who possess outstanding potential in the visual and performing arts, communication skills or sporting ability have the opportunity to associate with fellow students across a range of ages and possessing similar interests. Students with outstanding leadership potential may choose to contribute within social justice activities, student leadership groups, student publications and other extra-curricular aspects of school life.

Conclusion

PEGS is dedicated to the provision of an academic curriculum and a broad extra-curricular programme which encourages in each student the development of intellectual curiosity, respect for the tradition of scholarship, the realisation of his or her artistic and recreational potential and the practice of Christian values. In this context, the special needs of students to access the curriculum and co-curriculum are acknowledged, their progress is monitored and each student is actively encouraged to develop further to his or her potential.

Appendix: Disability Discrimination Act

The **Disability Discrimination Act 1992** and **Disability Standards for Education 2005** define disability as any of the following:

- Total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions
- Total or partial loss of a part of the body
- The presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness
- The presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness
- The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body
- A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction
- A disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour.

The Act and Standards also explicitly include a disability, either temporary or permanent, that

- Presently exists
- Previously existed but no longer exists
- Might exist in the future (including because of genetic predisposition to that disability)
- Is imputed to a person.

It is not a requirement of the Act or the Standards that a student is diagnosed by a qualified health professional to be recognised as a student with disability or that there is acknowledgement of the existence of disability by the student or parents.