

JAMES MEEHAN HIGH SCHOOL



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Middle School Brief

James Meehan High School - Middle School



The successful structure of any organisation is built on a strong foundation. James Meehan High School has begun to create and implement a new initiative of Middle School, unique in the schooling model. This model is an intentional approach to teaching and learning that is responsive and appropriate to the full range of needs, interests and achievements of middle year's students in formal and informal schooling contexts. It includes building a smooth transition from primary schooling to secondary schooling and will encompass Year 7 and Year 8.

The Middle Years correspond to the developmental period of puberty and early adolescence. Students in the middle years are experiencing a profound transition from childhood to adolescence. They feel special and focus on 'me'. They are undergoing a range of significant physical, intellectual, emotional and social changes which are complex, interactive and variable. This is a unique period of growth for young people.

The Middle Years of schooling are a time when students are potentially at a peak, but this period is not only one in which this potential is generally not achieved but where previous achievement levels decline on entry into secondary school. The learning leaps and bounds that students make towards the end of their primary education are often eroded during the first years of high school. This is the time for the greatest risk of student disengagement. This can create problems of negative behaviour, poor attendance and disrespect shown towards both teachers and other students.

The first phase of implementation of a Middle School has begun with the introduction of a designated, refurbished learning area with students having a Home Room. Subject areas are held in the Home Rooms and students have the experience of moving into specialised learning areas for subjects such as Technology, Visual Arts, Music and the practical component of the Science course.

It is the teachers and the nature of the curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment practices they construct that make the difference. Explicit instructions, strict boundaries, modelling positive behaviour and routine consistency creates a culture of high expectations with opportunities to explore an entirely new learning environment.



Effective relationships between students and teachers are most important, based on mutual respect, dignity and trust. A culture of learning and belonging has been created which has been the cornerstone of the Middle School approach.

The second phase is underway as the staff who will form next year's Year 7 team undertaking a series of professional learning to develop and implement highly effective programs using the pedagogical framework of 4MAT. The Teaming structure will be added where teachers join forces, collaborate, work together, cooperate and share resources. Teaming is the core of Middle Schooling where teachers come together as a team to achieve a common goal delivering several subjects by one teacher. A Literacy teacher will be responsible for the delivery of English, Geography and History and a Numeracy teacher will deliver Maths and Science. A significantly reduced number of teachers and a Home classroom are central to establishing a positive learning environment.

Middle School at James Meehan High School is a small learning community which provides students with sustained individual attention in a safe environment.



Newly Introduced Programs as a Component of the Middle School



James Meehan High School and its feeder primary schools of Curran, Glenfield, Glenwood, Guise and Macquarie Fields have formed a Community of Schools with regular meetings of both Principals and teachers.

Recently, the school conducted the James Meehan Cup where the Community of Schools Stage 3 students competed in an academic challenge. This event fosters relationships with teachers, students and the community as well as providing the opportunity for our high school student Leadership Team to further develop their skills in an event of this calibre. All schools were actively engaged in the literacy and numeracy challenges and were strongly supported by parents, teachers and fellow students. As a result, our school communities are embracing this new experience and are looking forward to the next challenge to be held each term.

Year 7 students participate in a Literacy program called Mentoring Mates. This is a partnership between Daystar Foundation, Clayton Utz and James Meehan High School. Throughout the school year seven letters are exchanged between the students and employees of the legal corporation, Clayton Utz. Focus is on student improved literacy skills, mastering the art of letter writing, protocol of presentation and relationship building with a mentor working in various portfolios in the corporate world.

Behind all these strands stands a passionate and dedicated advocate for Public Education, Margaret Downey, who is driving this initiative in the best interest of all the students supported by the committed staff of James Meehan High School. The support from the community has been overwhelming allowing the opportunity to collaborate and create a community of schools to support the educational pathway for the children in our community.



*Alone we can do so little,
but together we can do so much.
The journey has begun...*



Come and join us!

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