



CHRIST CHURCH GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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Response to the Parliamentary Enquiry into Music Education in Victoria

Christ Church Grammar School is one of a number of Independent Primary Schools in Victoria. It has 350 students in attendance from years Prep to Six and of these 260 were enrolled in independent music lessons at the beginning of this school year. This number will increase. Almost half of these students learn piano and many commence their lessons in Prep. This is because music is a highly valued aspect of the curriculum and school life throughout the school community. There are a number of students at the school on the autism spectrum and these students inevitably learn an instrument as the value of coordinating right and left brain function and fine and gross motor coordination is recognised by our music teachers and by the school, which has a very active individual differences program.

It is the special features of Christ Church Grammar, the close-knit ties between parents and staff, the special relationship the school has with its link to the Anglican parish of Christ Church, and the special areas of learning it provides including focused and small classes in literacy and numeracy, a broad and active humanities program, a massive music and PE program, art, library, LOTE and an excellent Individual Differences department which looks at the special needs of all students and their families, which contributes to the very successful results in the school and the desire for families to attend.

Music was actually the reason for the start of the school. Christ Church had an active choir with many young boys and it was decided that the Church should help provide them with an education.

The affiliation of the school and Church continues its great relationship. Students in our choirs and ensembles perform at a range of church services throughout the year, from special Sunday combined school and church services, to The World Prayer Day and Reconciliation Services held each year.

All students from Prep to Year 6 engage in the music classroom program for one hour a week. In this class, students work towards the VELS outcomes, engaging in performing, composing, singing and listening activities all based around broad-ranging enquiry topics pitched at the maturity level of students. Increasingly, as students develop greater

independent learning skills, they are provided with open-ended tasks in which they are encouraged to use their music skills to develop creative solutions. There is a massive cross-over in the skills that students develop in the instrumental program into the class program. All students learn to play marimba from Prep. They play a range of other percussion instruments and in the higher years develop skills on computer sequencing programs. The emphasis is on ensuring that students develop a sense of their own musical identity and can confidently and joyfully express and communicate through music by the time they leave us at the end of year six.

The classroom program is supplemented by a compulsory half hour of choir for students from years 2 - 5. In choir students learn to sing in parts and a Capella, in addition to learning a range of songs pitched at their age interest and a range of pieces for performance at Christ Church. Students are also involved in Music. Count Us In each year, learning the song sung right around Australia at the same time, and travelling to the city for a multi-school performance.

Additionally, students learn a string instrument in years two and three. We are in the fortunate situation of being able to have a class set of instruments and to allow students to hire instruments and keep them at home throughout the year to practise.

We have a large dedicated music staff. I am the Director of Music and have been involved in Music Education for my entire career as a teacher of students at pre- school, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. I have written a range of music education text books and been actively involved in the development of music curriculum and curriculum support materials in Victoria and nationally over many years and curriculum incarnations. My training was as a specialist music teacher. I am a life member of the Association of Music Educators and am actively involved with PD through this organisation and also through the Music Council of Australia, whose two day assembly I attend annually. Other staff are kept up to date with PD opportunities through the aMuse mail outs. They attend according to their specialities, for example accompanying, new repertoire, or specialist Suzuki training courses. Victoria is blessed with PD opportunities for music teachers. Our school also has a partnership with Melbourne University, mentoring students participating in the Master of Music (Performance Teaching) course, and we endeavour to assist and nurture students, providing them with insight into the machinations of a large primary music school program.

I am supported by an assistant classroom music teacher, also a music specialist, and fourteen instrumental staff. Two piano teachers are there five days a week. There are two other piano teachers, two voice teachers, two guitar teachers, a percussion teacher, a cello teacher, two violin teachers, a brass teacher and a woodwind teacher. One of our guitar teachers also teaches theory. Many students sit for AMEB exams, but the school also provides music soirées, usually on a fortnightly basis for beginner students right through to established performers to play for their families, who all attend in abundance!

The school encourages the employment of instrumental teachers who are active musicians as composers, arrangers, accompanists and performers. Many are involved in high profile music ensembles across a range of musical genres, from opera to jazz, to percussion and we find that this combination of teaching and active music-making enhances teaching skills. These teachers are highly valued, highly competent staff members.

The school has a range of ensembles which rehearse at lunchtime and before school. They include Orchestra, Chamber Choir, Jazz Ensemble, Senior and Junior Strings,

Ukelele Band, Multi-Media Ensemble, Marimba Band and Guitar Ensemble. The Chamber Choir performs at the range of Church Services throughout the year. All ensembles perform at our special Music Alive concert held in Christ Church in term 3. This ensemble showcase is followed by a competition where individual instrumental students can perform one piece and an external adjudicator makes a judgement on that performance.

Christ Church Grammar is blessed with a large general music room which can be divided into 3 spaces and 8 individual learning rooms on two campuses. It has instruments to accommodate the needs of all students. Christ Church provides a wonderful venue for many school performances too.

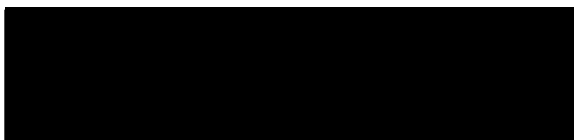
The school also uses the Melbourne Recital Centre for its bi-annual thematically based concert for all students from years 2 - 6. The whole school staff works collaboratively in the development of this concert which involves some very creative items of dance, music and drama and always includes a staff item. Each alternate year a musical is performed by students in years 4, 5, and 6 at St. Martin's Theatre.

The current state of Music Education in Victoria can only be described as erratic. There are pockets of excellence. I have been an observer of the MSO Pizzicato Effect program at Meadows Primary School and seen the difference in the formation of disciplined thinking through practice regimes and the amazing development of student self-esteem through this program. With the introduction of a supportive music classroom program, the joy factor is palpable. But there are many, many schools in Victoria which do not have access to any music education at all and the lack of appropriate training courses in tertiary institutions further continues to deplete the pool of educators equipped to adequately implement quality music programs, indeed, any music programs in schools. This comes at a time when many who have been trained as music educators and spent their lives in the sector are hanging up their batons. It is, frankly, a tragic situation.

Although I am currently working in a well-resourced school, I have also worked in highly underprivileged schools. One can run very successful and much loved classroom music programs with any old sound-making object. Indeed given the choice between a musically well-resourced school with no specialist music teacher, and a non-resourced school with a resourceful specialist music teacher, I would go for the latter every time. Good music teaching, like teaching in any other learning area, requires great skill, not great amounts of money. Money is always best invested in the training of teachers. Fabulous music can be made on a tin can or two, if you know how to use it! My other gained knowledge is that the support of the school community at levels is imperative to the success of the music program. I feel very blessed to have this at CCGS having worked in, and walked away from, environments where this is not the case.

It is no use here, speaking of the benefits of quality music education programs to the development of all aspects of being human. The research is there in abundance, both nationally and internationally. It just needs to be picked up, read and acted upon.

Yours sincerely



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Director of Music