



**ST PETERS  
GIRLS**



# Intensive Languages Program 2017



In 2016, St Peter's Girls' School implemented a new Intensive Languages Program for our Junior School students.

This has been an exciting curriculum initiative that will have far-reaching benefits for our youngest students, well beyond the traditional advantages of learning an additional language. The program has already established Saints Girls as a leader in language education in South Australia.

The program is designed to:

- > provide intensive language instruction and engagement, particularly in Years 4 – 6
- > respond to evidence of the benefits of second language learning to the developing brain
- > maintain current language choices while systematically introducing the option of Mandarin Chinese
- > provide a background speakers' program for advanced Mandarin Chinese speakers.

## About the program

Reception to Year 3 students will take part in two language lessons a week, in either Chinese or French. They will continue this language until the end of Year 5.

The intensity of language learning increases from Year 4, with students participating in four lessons per week. In 2017, Year 5 students will continue Japanese, while Year 6 students have been given the option to change to French if they desire.

A separate class is also held for native speakers of Mandarin Chinese at an alternative time, during which their first language skills will be fostered and developed. Native Mandarin Chinese speakers will study French as their additional language.

## At a glance

2017	Language	Lessons per week
Reception	Chinese OR French	x 2
Year 1		
Year 2		
Year 3		
Year 4	Chinese OR French	x 4
Year 5	Japanese	
Year 6	Japanese OR French	

The School will continue to provide students with the opportunity to study Chinese, French and Japanese. Chinese is a relatively new option within the curriculum, but a crucial addition due to the growing importance of China in the world economy. A compelling number of people in the world speak Mandarin Chinese as their first or second language.

The Junior School curriculum follows the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP). Language classes for Junior School students continue to be taught by our team of specialist Languages teachers, who also teach our Middle and Senior students.

Making connections between language learning and other domains of study continues to be an important focus, and as such, the language teachers work closely with classroom teachers to ensure current Units of Inquiry are incorporated into the language courses.

As students progress to Year 7, they can elect to study Chinese, French or Japanese for the three years of Middle School. These languages are also options for Senior School students.



## The benefits of learning a new language

The benefits of studying a language stretch far beyond vocabulary and grammar skills. Students are immersed in a new culture and are encouraged to see the world through a different lens and appreciate cultural diversity. In doing so, students are able to reach a deeper understanding of the language they are studying and make considered reflections about the world in which we live.

In our increasingly connected world, our leaders of tomorrow need a truly global perspective. The study

of different languages is a practical way for students to engage with an international mindset. This is an important part of our girls' education, from the early years and into the Middle and Senior Schools.

The study of a language also improves decoding skills, which are transferable to Mathematics and science subjects in particular, and also equips the girls with life skills that will stand them in good stead for the future.



The value of learning a second language is a well researched area of education.

Language study:

- > aids metalinguistic awareness; that is, students are more aware of how language is structured, which flows onto increased understanding of their mother tongue and benefits in literacy development in their first language (Liddicoat, 2001)
- > offers insights into other cultures and ways of thinking and relating to the world in ways that no other area of the curriculum can offer (Fernandez, 2007)
- > allows students to understand themselves and others, and to understand and use diverse ways of knowing, being and doing (MCEETYA, 2005)
- > alters grey matter (the area of the brain which processes information) in the same way that exercise builds muscles (Mechelli et al., 2004)
- > increases creativity and the four components of divergent thinking ability: fluency, elaboration, originality, and flexibility (Ghonsooly, 2012)
- > enables students to further develop their cognitive skills through thinking critically and analytically, solving problems, and making connections in their learning (MCEETYA, 2005)



## Based on research

For three years, one of our Junior School cohorts participated in a research project conducted by the Research Centre for Languages & Cultures at the University of South Australia.

This research project, led by Associate Professor Angela Scarino and her team, examined the intensive teaching of languages at a number of schools through methods such as bilingual subjects and daily lessons. St Peter's Girls was invited to be part of this project, where our students studied Japanese daily as they progressed from Year 4 through to Year 6. We were delighted to see the benefits for our students first-hand.

The results of the research project were exceptional, with students dramatically increasing their understanding of vocabulary and structures as well as developing

metacognitive knowledge at a higher level than expected.

The students were able to think more analytically about language in general, could discover patterns more easily – thus increasing their higher order thinking skills – as well as perceiving and critiquing the world using different perspectives. There were also distinct cognitive benefits and skills transferable to other learning areas.

This project highlighted outstanding outcomes, which go well beyond the benefits of merely understanding, speaking and reading a second language. We were excited to launch our Intensive Languages Program in the Junior School in 2016 and look forward to the girls making remarkable academic progress in the years to come.



## More information

The Head of Languages, Cindy Pitkin, oversees the Intensive Languages Program and can assist in answering any queries about its implementation. Email [cpitkin@stpetersgirls.sa.edu.au](mailto:cpitkin@stpetersgirls.sa.edu.au).

If you are considering a St Peter's Girls education for your daughter and would like further details about how she can benefit from our innovative program, contact the Head of Junior School, Suzanne Haddy, on 8334 2200 or email [shaddy@stpetersgirls.sa.edu.au](mailto:shaddy@stpetersgirls.sa.edu.au).



**ST PETERS**  
**GIRLS**

**CHALLENGE YOUR THINKING**

Stonyfell Road, Stonyfell SA 5066  
PO Box 1185 Kensington Gardens SA 5068  
T (08) 8334 2200 | F (08) 8364 1523 | [admin@stpetersgirls.sa.edu.au](mailto:admin@stpetersgirls.sa.edu.au)  
[stpetersgirls.sa.edu.au](http://stpetersgirls.sa.edu.au)

