

“We are the Uniting Church in Australia”

Series One: Our Story

“Educating for Life”

Josie Crisara

Aitken College is a Prep to Year 12 Uniting Church School. We're a low-fee school so we try to make ourselves as accessible to families as possible.

We are a very multi-faith and multicultural community, and that provides a richness to who we are, and certainly very reflective of the wider community in which we live. And it's just beautiful to see how accepting and interesting and diverse our school community is, both with what we do here at school but outside in the broader community as well.

We certainly talk about the fact that we're a Uniting Church school and that faith development is an important part of what we're about.

Chris Ward

The sort of values that Aitken College tries to instil in the students, for me, comes from almost, straight from the Gospels, from Paul's writing - the fruits of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control.

And so we focus on that a great deal, particularly love, forgiveness and acceptance, and that message is really brought through to the kids, that they are loved. That God loves them and cares for them, but not just that, that's their individual understanding, but then they would model that – they would take that out with them into the world.

Jeanne Beale

My role as chaplain at Aitken College is a varied and fun role. I have the blessing of being able to support the whole family. We have parents who attend our Junior Chapel cause the first year I was here some parents were saying “What goes on in your chapel services?” and I said “Well why don't you come along?” And so they started coming along and now we've got a regular 50-60 parents that come to Junior Chapel.

So as chaplain here, I also do some counselling, so we pick up on a lot of the kids who are struggling with their self-esteem but also if there's a child that's bullying another child, then picking up that bully as well as the bullied, because both of them have issues going on.

They tend to get the Gospel message through the way I teach them in class and I try and have a fun RVE class but teach the basic message of the Christian gospel. There is some that happens every single day that lets you know that your role within this school is nurturing, and you know, helping people to learn that they are loved.

Lou Bernes

And it's more than imparting knowledge. It's trying to educate kids how to think, how to problem solve, how to negotiate, and that's what we're trying to do. That's what I'm very conscious of. The ethos of the school is something that I relate to very deeply. It's a Uniting Church School,

obviously, but it's got a broader perspective, I think. It includes a whole range of faiths, a whole range of attitudes and values. It cares for students and it cares for staff.

Laura Cregan

We have 50 schools nationally, with approximately 50,000 students. It's not only about the academic for our students. I think our teachers and our chaplains are really committed to going on that journey with young people and really investing in them and asking them, what are the questions that they have, and how do we journey along with that, and how do we tie in their emotional and spiritual and academic needs into creating a bigger picture around how they participate in society and what that's about.

Steve Bousfield

Westminster was established in 1961 as a Methodist School. Our central purpose has to be to prepare young people for the world that they're going to live into in the future—So we've got to ensure that our curriculum, that our teaching methodology, that our worship and the way in which we fit within the Uniting Church, seriously does prepare people for the time when they leave school. So we're looking obviously at a highly academic program but at the same time we will focus very much on the well-being and the pastoral care of those students.

One of the things that I think that we are most proud of in our recent history is the way we've been able to accept indigenous students into our community. We now have 19 indigenous students in the school— And most pleasing for me is the fact that most of these students graduate from Year 12 and graduate successfully.

Patrick Gillespie

I would say probably 90-95% of a chapel service now is almost completely run by students. And some staff engagement. When it comes from the students, they embrace it. They own it. They love it.

Once we began engaging in feeding the homeless about five years ago, the students began coming back and sharing their stories, and they would share the stories of meeting people who had come from some very difficult circumstances So as a result of that is our students would come back and share the stories of these people they met, and honestly, they probably experienced God in a setting which probably is something you just couldn't plan.

Phillip Stewart

We don't look at service as being just an activity. We look at being a learning experience for our students. And from a personal perspective, at the time I've been in the school, the one thing I would say that's a strength of the school is that the school has a community sense to it. It's not a secular sense. It's a Christian community spirit that's in there.

Assembly, Uniting Church in Australia
assembly.uca.org.au
enquiries@nat.uca.org.au