



The Launceston Preparatory School Organisation of Students

Traditionally, schools have organised students into grades purely on the basis of children sharing the same age. However, we believe this to be rather arbitrary arrangement made on the basis of convenience rather than educational rationale. Students at the Launceston Preparatory school are organised into multi-age groupings. Whilst Kindergarten students are kept as a homogenous group (for their comfort and stability) all other children are grouped as 5-7 year olds, 7-9 year olds and 9-12 year olds. We have found this to have benefits in individual achievement but it also most effectively supports the self esteem of each child, promotes their interest in learning and focuses teaching and learning practices upon the particular needs of the students. Children in these groups are not streamed by ability, but more by social factors, such as who works well with whom.

The second most important organisational factor that distinguishes our school is our active maintenance of small class sizes. We believe that the optimum size for a class is 15-18 students and so that is the maximum range for the students in their multi-age groupings. Within that class size, however, children will be coached in even smaller groups according to their particular skill needs at the time and not necessarily confined by preconceived and often artificial idea of what a child of that age should be covering.

The third characteristic feature of our school that needs to be noted is that students do not stay in one room with one teacher throughout their day. Whilst we expect our staff to be generalists, it is a fact of life that all teachers have different strengths and we seek to exploit these.

Younger children move between two and three teachers during the day who broadly divide their expertise into sciences and the humanities. They may also enjoy some specially trained teachers for Music and Physical Education. The older the children, the more changes they have in the structure of their school day. An 11 year old, for example, may move from the teacher for literacy skills to another for Maths to another for the Arts and another for areas of musical study, Physical Education or LOTE.

We believe this approach has several benefits:

- a variety of teachers is stimulating;
- children learn to get along with different people;
- physically moving between lessons and seeing the results of other children's work in other rooms can be refreshing and stimulating; and

It facilitates the student's transition to high-school.

These three distinguishing organisational features of the Launceston Preparatory School are important to understand as the context for our implementation of the Paideia philosophy.

