



The Launceston Preparatory School

Use of a thematic approach

Each term, the staff decides upon a theme to act as an “umbrella” over the content and skills to be taught across the school. This is not a feature prescribed by the original developers of the Paideia programme, but one that we at The Launceston Preparatory School have found to be a valuable vehicle for achieving our objectives. An Australian-based theme is always selected once each year, pursuant to the Paideia philosophy that children need to know about their own country and its society if they are to become active and constructive citizens within it. For the other two terms each year, we try to vary the key learning area bases of the themes, encompassing opportunities for focusing on a range of humanities or science-based ideas. Each staff member then develops an approach to the theme that suits the age of the children and the curriculum areas they are teaching.

There are many reasons why we develop a thematic approach in this way. Foremost among these is the way it has proven to capture and sustain the interest of the children – and children learn best when they are interested! Their understanding of the complexities of a theme can be fostered further as they move from one room to another in the course of their day, sharing the work that other groups – perhaps of different ages – have covered on the same theme. The thematic approach also helps build a collegial atmosphere among staff, where resources and ideas are shared and different groups of children often brought together to learn ways that are more meaningful.

It also facilitates our teaching to an integrated and spiral curriculum. This is where subjects are linked together in our teaching and concepts and skills are periodically revisited, perhaps at a more sophisticated level, to consolidate and extend understanding.

