

Phillip Island Village School Philosophy

2024 update

In the years since PIVS was established in 2016, we have continued to offer an alternative to mainstream education options and our school's philosophy has developed according to the needs of our families and the society in which we find ourselves. As an intentionally small school of no more than 65 students, we strive to create a deep, authentic, and holistic educational experience for our students. Our school has roots in both democratic and progressive educational models, with an expression that is uniquely our own.

As a school, our aim is to nurture the whole child, and to support the expression and development of their individual sparks and strengths. We aim to instil within them a sense of autonomy and responsibility. We prioritise learning the skills for empathising and collaborating with others. And we intend for them to take these skills into the wider world; developing their curiosity, and wanting to understand and make a difference in the world.

The child

All human beings are born with an innate desire and ability to learn. Our role is to provide a learning environment that continues to nurture these qualities and actively promotes a growth mindset within each child. Our approach to teaching and learning is founded on these key beliefs:

- Providing direct instruction about executive skills is a practical way to empower students to achieve their goals.
- Children can manage high expectations and thrive on the confidence that our faith in them brings.
- All people benefit from a high degree of self-awareness. We use a range of approaches to develop children's social and emotional intelligence.
- Learning is most effective when its intention is visible and the activity purposeful.
- Trust between Mentor and student is important to achieving an individual's learning potential.
- Self-actualisation, the realisation of one's potential, is a worthy goal to pursue.
- Play-based, project-based and inquiry-based learning all provide opportunities for children to explore their passions and discover new areas of interest.
- You become a good decision maker with practice. At PIVS we provide lots of choices and opportunities for making decisions, along with teaching critical thinking skills.
- We believe that taking risks is an important part of growing and learning. Allowing children to take physical, social, and cognitive risks develops their ability to match their skills to the situation or environment.

This balanced framework of freedom and responsibility provides the students at PIVS with many opportunities to develop and utilise their autonomy and to take an active role in decision-making. These opportunities allow students to exercise their social and emotional intelligence skills as they consider options and consequences. Autonomy/self-determination in relation to curriculum tasks can be highly motivating and is solidly grounded in constructivist theories about learning. There is overwhelming evidence to suggest that children learn far more effectively when they have had some say into the what, how, where and when of their work. This may mean deciding how to



approach a topic, who to learn with, how to demonstrate what they know. It may also mean deciding where to study and when to take a break, when to eat and when to seek solitude.

The group

Relationships are the base from which all else stems, at school and in life. We are mindful of our role in each relationship, in each moment, and respond to each situation by choosing whether to lead, work alongside or follow the other. Our school's behaviour management policy is based on connection, empathy and restorative practices.

Effective participation in a community takes practice, trust, a willingness to receive feedback and a balance between the needs of the individual and the needs of the group.

The skills of social and emotional intelligence are learned through interaction with and observation of the people around us, as well as support to understand and practice these skills. Through personal experience and guidance from others we develop an emotional framework through which we attempt to meet our needs and in time, the needs of others. Some of the habits we bring to our relationships work effectively for us and others require refinement - particularly as our social experiences become more complex.

At PIVS we believe that human beings don't always need high levels of externally imposed control in order to form a socially cohesive and highly functioning society. However, in the broader community no one has absolute freedom. We are all required to modify our behaviour so as to fit in with the agreed norms of the group - it is the same at PIVS. At times, all children, staff, parents and volunteers may be required to modify their behaviour to fit in with the agreed values, guidelines and principles of our school. The adults and children will decide on the group's 'rules' together.

The world

Human beings live in a world of interdependence. Without clean water, fertile soil and a biodiversity of plants and animals the continuation of our relatively comfortable lives is at risk. We each have a responsibility to consider how our actions affect the health of our natural environment and the things that live within it – both locally and globally. As our modern lives become busier and more 'virtual', we risk losing our connection with the things that sustain us. Without this connection we become detached from our natural environment and increasingly unmindful of its delicate balance. Within the PIVS community we work hard to foster a deep understanding of, and respect for, our natural environment and its resources. A desire for sustainability and minimum impact guide many of our programs and activities.

At PIVS we also aim to foster strong connections with our local community. By focusing on real-life activities that engage students with individuals and groups in the immediate community of Phillip Island, as well as the surrounding towns, we aim to help students develop awareness of their place within the whole. By utilising public resources such as libraries, recreation centres and parks we can appreciate their value in community life and by participating in community activities and events we can contribute in real ways to the quality of our wider community. PIVS also seeks external inspiration for its educational programs and makes use of current research findings in this space. Mentors regularly attend professional development, visit other schools and share ideas that inspire them.



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We strive to be true to our values, to make authentic connections, and to follow through on our commitments to children, families and the wider community.

We recognise that attending a small school in regional Victoria could limit the children's exposure to ideas and experiences that differ from those held by people around them. At PIVS, we acknowledge our responsibility to give students the tools to navigate their place in the world. This includes learning from the traditional owners of the Bunurong Country on which we learn and play. We believe that by understanding their own cultural contexts, children are better equipped to learn about the world outside their direct experience.

We strongly believe that children are entitled to feel optimistic about their future. When we investigate the world's significant environmental and social challenges we do so from a hopeful and solutions-focused perspective.