



# LEARNING AND TEACHING POLICY

## St Roch's Parish Primary School

### RATIONALE

At St Roch's, teaching is designed around students' needs and interests and assessment information is used to monitor each student's growth and progress. Teachers at St Roch's create communities of learning that invite questions and support students to be curious and to develop the skills and resilience they need to succeed as lifelong learners.

We use an inquiry approach to multidisciplinary learning, encouraging our students to think critically and to make connections with their learning and real life. Inquiries are designed around developing important conceptual understandings that can be applied to a wide range of contexts. Through engaging in inquiries about the world around us and investigating important issues facing society, we aim for our students to experience deep and relevant learning that encourages reflective and creative thinking. At St Roch's, we seek to develop motivated, creative and independent learners who demonstrate strong social values and are capable of making a difference in their community.

At St Roch's, an inquiry approach to multidisciplinary units of work was selected because:

- It develops the skills that students will need to be managers of their own learning throughout life.
- Using a question piques curiosity and invites students to inquire and explore new ideas and issues. Students are more active in their learning if the questions are theirs.
- It allows students to build on prior knowledge and to connect learning with their lives, making learning more purposeful and engaging.
- Inquiry involves a shift in the role of the teacher and makes the learning more student-driven.

### The role of the student in Inquiry learning

- Students are active in the learning process
- Students raise questions, gather information and describe their observations, propose explanations, and use observations
- Students plan and carry out learning activities
- Students communicate their learning using a variety of methods
- Students critique their learning practices

### The role of the teacher in Inquiry Learning

- To provide clear learning intentions and success criteria in each lesson and to articulate these or co-construct these with students
- To be explicit with students about the purpose for the learning.
- To encourage students to ask good questions and support them in finding the answers/solutions
- To give constructive and timely feedback
- To differentiate support and explicit teaching based on needs of students
- To explicitly develop students' understanding of inquiry skills and processes
- To scaffold the use of inquiry skills and processes so that by year 6 students are able to use these independently

### BELIEFS & VALUES

Inquiry units of learning at St Roch's are designed around developing important **conceptual understandings** that can be applied to a wide range of contexts. Through engaging in inquiries about the world around us and investigating important issues facing society, we aim for our students to experience deep and relevant learning that encourages critical and creative thinking. Our approach to learning is multi-disciplinary, building students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills alongside developing content knowledge and general capabilities. Inquiry topics are viewed through the lens of our Catholic faith and links are made with the RE Curriculum. STEM education is valued and highlighted in inquiry units at our school. This focus on STEM provides our students with opportunities to develop the skills of problem-solving, decision-making and collaborating that will support them to be active contributors to society.

Conceptual understandings are seen as being developed from P-6 in various contexts. These are planned in a 2-year cycle to ensure there is a balance of Victorian Curriculum content covered and that learning for students is sequential and developmental.

(Curriculum Mapping documents [here](#))

## IMPLEMENTATION

### Planning

Planning of integrated inquiry units at St Roch's occurs in three stages:



#### Stage 1: Whole staff PLT

Planning begins with a concept which is a throughline for inquiries across the whole school. At Stage 1, a PLT is dedicated to the development of a Learning and Teaching statement that outlines the importance of learning about the concept, the knowledge, skills and capabilities that the students will develop, relevance to students' lives as well as how the concept relates to the Catholic faith. This PLT involves an exploration of relevant content from the Victorian Curriculum and the R.E. Curriculum.

(Learning & Teaching statements [here](#))

#### Stage 2: Full Day Planning

At the end of each term, a full day is dedicated to planning of the inquiry units in teams. This day involves an aspect of professional learning around the curriculum content area and the designing of provocations to engage students in the learning. Key concepts, understandings and guiding questions are developed and Victorian Curriculum content is identified, including Capabilities.

#### Stage 3: Facilitated Planning

During Week 2 or 3 of the term, each planning team spends 2 hours in a facilitated planning session with the L&T leader. Teachers come to this planning session with evidence of students' prior knowledge and their interests and/or questions about the topic. This information is used as the basis for planning the next sequence of learning experiences.

Teachers design learning experiences for the unit in 3 phases:

1. **Building**
2. **Investigating**
3. **Applying**

The *Building* section of the Inquiry only is planned in Stage 2 of the planning cycle. This involves providing a stimulus or provocation to engage students, finding out prior knowledge and building skills, vocabulary and content knowledge required. A review of student interests and questions further guides the planning of the *Investigation* and *Applying* components of the Inquiry. These are discussed at a facilitated planning session in Stage 3 of the planning cycle when the direction of the unit is further planned and documented. Skills and content from the Victorian Curriculum are taught explicitly in the Building stage of the Inquiry and assessment of these skills and understandings form the basis for reporting in the content and capability areas.

## Documentation

A central folder is created each year in the *Staff* shared folder for resources that can be used to support Inquiry planning. Planning teams have a dedicated Inquiry folder for inquiry planners inside their level planning folders.

Click [here](#) for Inquiry Planners 2018-2019.

Click [here](#) for a blank Inquiry planner.

Click [here](#) for an explanation of sections of the planner.

### At St Roch's, we believe that an effective inquiry unit should:

- Address an authentic issue/problem
- Develop important conceptual understandings about the world
- Be relevant to the students' lives
- Use open-ended and challenging questions
- Use a variety of sources of information including first-hand experiences
- Have a connection to students' lives
- Use open-ended & challenging questions
- Use a variety of sources of information
- Allow the students to reflect on their experiences
- Engage students in thinking critically
- Encourage persistence
- Provide opportunities for the students to question
- Provide opportunities for students to share their learning
- Enable students to make a positive, ongoing transformation in their daily lives
- Make connections with the community
- Provide the students with choice about their learning
- Provide students with choice in how they present their learning

Staff have outlined what would make a successful inquiry in [this document](#). This success criteria is used by staff to evaluate inquiry units. It outlines the elements of Inquiry learning that are most valued at St Roch's and also identifies what staff are expected to attend to in their design of Inquiry units.

## Development of Inquiry Skills

Inquiry skills are taught through according to the Gradual Release of Responsibility model. From P-2 inquiry units are whole class and teacher-directed but centred on investigations of both content and student questions. Inquiry skills are modelled by the teacher. In Years 3 - 4 students begin to develop their own or group investigations often within a given range of options. The inquiry process is taught more explicitly and students are guided by the teacher in using these skills. By Years 5 and 6, it is aimed that students develop their own questions for investigation and can demonstrate inquiry skills more independently.

## Pedagogical Practices

At St Roch's, teachers strive to create units of inquiry that lead students into deep learning and animate them as learners. Teachers source materials and experiences that will engage students emotionally in the learning and provoke critical and creative thinking.

Throughout the course of the unit, grouping of students is flexible and will involve in whole class, small groups, pairs or individual learning experiences. In the junior years, students may work at learning centres engaging in hands-on learning experiences that provoke curiosity. Teacher observations and student questions are used for planning further learning experiences. Teaching in the middle and senior classes involves students in researching, surveying, interviewing and problem-solving as methods for investigating a concept or answering essential questions.

All teachers aim to use primary sources of information where possible, including excursions, guest speakers, experiments and other hands-on experiences. Student reflection is encouraged at key stages throughout the inquiry and student discussion and collaboration are key pedagogies for inquiry learning.

Learning experiences in inquiry are differentiated in several ways. Students frequently work in collaborative groups and are supported by learning in a variety of ways e.g. diagrams, manipulatives, games, interviews, videos,

diagrams, guest speakers, excursions as well as written material. Students' prior knowledge is considered as the starting point for learning design and choice is provided for students in how they demonstrate their learning.

## **Assessment**

Teachers are required to collect evidence of student learning in the following areas:

- Science (x 2)
- Health (F-6)
- History (Years 1-6)
- Geography (Years 1-6)
- Civics & Citizenship (Years 3-6)
- Economics & Business (Years 5-6)
- The Arts (F-6)
- The Technologies (Years 1-6)
- Personal & Social Capability (F-6)
- Other Capabilities (Years 1-6)

Assessment in Inquiry requires teachers to monitor student development in their knowledge, skills and understandings in content areas as well as student capabilities. Assessment takes many forms in inquiry including:

- Skills checklists
- Anecdotal notes and observations
- Rubrics
- Samples of work
- Pre-post unit assessments
- Student reflections
- Performances of understanding e.g. video, drama, art, writing, oral presentations
- Student self-assessment
- Rich assessment tasks

## **Professional Learning in Inquiry**

Staff receive professional learning to develop their skills in designing inquiry units through:

- PL in the first session of each of the planning days
- PLTs scheduled throughout the year to address aspects of inquiry learning e.g. developing & assessing capabilities in Inquiry, development of rubrics, moderation of samples of work
- Participation in the STEM Collective 2017-2018. This involved professional learning in STEM through school closure days as well as classroom visits in other schools
- Setting their own goals for their teaching based on evaluation of their units against the success criteria. The Learning & Teaching leader supports teachers in achieving their goals through facilitated planning, feedback and modelling
- A Google+ Community has been developed to further teachers' knowledge about inquiry. In this space teachers have access to professional reading, relevant resources, materials for provocations, professional learning opportunities and sharing knowledge and ideas with each other.

## **Parent & Community Engagement**

Parents in the school are seen as resources for student learning. Parents with particular experiences or expertise are invited to share this with the students as a primary source of information, e.g. builders, gardeners, doctors, lawyers, architects, scientists.

Learning in inquiry is extended to learning at home. Information about the intended outcomes of the learning are shared with parents through Term Overviews early in each term. Parents are involved in the learning through participation in class activities as well as activities that students do at home with their families throughout the year.

Student learning is also extended through links to the community. Members of the parish, council and local community support inquiry learning by sharing their experiences and expertise with our students. Community members who have first-hand knowledge of the local area and school and church history all provide invaluable input and authenticity to enrich our inquiry learning.

**EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed with staff, student, parent and community input as part of the school's three year review cycle.

**LINKS TO OTHER ST ROCH'S POLICIES****Staff Members Involved:**

Marian Nicolazzo, Donna Anderson, Leadership Team & Staff

**Date of Ratification:**

22 May 2019

**Date of Review:**

May 2022

*All students attending St Roch's Parish Primary School have the right to feel safe.  
The care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people is a fundamental responsibility of all within our school.*