

The Cottage School



www.cottageschool.tas.edu.au

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

THE attic in the old Green Cottage had long been home to bits and pieces that nobody at the Cottage School had the heart to throw out.

Recent renovations unearthed a treasure trove of artefacts telling some of the history of our unique school.

As we pored over the old letters, books of student writings and artwork, embroidered wall hangings, committee meeting minutes and much more, we became aware of the traditions we've kept over time.

The Cottage School in Bellerive began in 1975, when the late Sally Sorell recognised the need for an alternative model of education.

We like our small school. We have a good

student-teacher ratio, there's a homely feel; our buildings are cosy, sunny and comfortable places to work and play. We follow the Tasmanian Curriculum, with music, art, drama and multi-media forming an important part of our program.

Older children are encouraged to look after the younger children and we all know each other. We've always called our teachers by their first names. We feel relaxed, secure, confident part of a big family.

People find it hard to believe we don't have a principal. A Board of Management made up of teachers, parents and a business administrator runs our school co-operatively, and has done so since the school began.

This model allows all members of our community to enrich our learning. Our school is a circle of equals, not a triangle with a leader.

Anne Patel has taught at the school for 30 years and says every child is different. They learn in different ways and we structure our teaching to meet their learning needs.

Anne's daughter, Hana, is a former student and recently said that Cottage School leavers transitioned to high school as confident learners, strong in all areas of the curriculum.

Many of the cornerstones of our school philosophy have been in place since it began. Camps are one of these. All children from Grades 3 to 6 go on camp, three times a year.

From learning to be responsible for our belongings, to pitching tents and washing the porridge pot, camp allows us to learn about our environment, build resilience and skills for life.

Cottage School has a healthy food policy. We don't have a canteen so we bring fruit and sandwiches for shared platters and we drink water. On Mondays we help a parent cook a hot meal for 80 people.

Our food policy encourages us to try foods that we may not eat at home. We have our own vegetable garden and the meal costs about \$1.25 per person.

We have Bike Days twice a year and Environment Days once a month. On Bike Days we learn

about road safety, and ride to a variety of places.

We learn bike maintenance so we know how to fix tyres when they're punctured and some times we go to BMX parks to race each other around the track.

A traditional Environment Day is the trip to Longley waterhole where we swim, climb the big old oak tree and pick blackberries.

We go on lots of bushwalks and visit museums, galleries and factories, but more importantly we get to explore places that we can share with our families in the future.

As Margie Stirling, another teacher of long standing says, "children are amazing. Put them in the right environment and they will learn."

School talk

What do you like about the Cottage School?



Olive: I like the focus on outdoor learning because it's fun and more practical.



Leo: I like going on environment days because we go to cool places in the bus. I also like sewing because I can make animals and pillows.



Ilan: I like playing dodge ball at break.



Kate: I like working in small groups because teachers know where you're up to. They know what needs improving and what doesn't.



Edward: I like the school because it's small and the kids are considerate and friendly.



Ava: I like that we don't wear uniforms. You get to wear free clothes all day.

Family ties

COTTAGE School students interviewed George Underwood, son of the late Sally Sorell who founded our school.

"Mum started the school because she felt it was important that children have a loving, nurturing environment in which to learn.

"Mum had a clear vision, a determination to create something special and a real love for education, particularly for younger children. In a lot of ways the idea and the vision is the easy part, it's the hard work that follows and the dedication to see it through that should really be celebrated.

"In the early days the school was a pretty wild

place where we felt as kids there was an almost anything goes attitude. Schoolwork was done sitting on the floor at cut-down kitchen tables. We had school camps, bike days, environment days, and of course the infamous shared lunches.

"Cottage School left me with a lot of happy memories and a feeling that this is the place where I did my really important learning.

"My wife Dianne and I have chosen the Cottage School for our daughter Eloise because we believe this school in particular will help her develop a confidence and a self-belief that's so important to have throughout one's life."



SCHOOL TIES: Former Cottage School student George Underwood and his daughter Eloise, at left, with the students who produced this page, back from left: Mia, Jesse, Aaron, Jacob, Kyle, Stanley; and front: Caitlin, Larissa, Brendan, Olive, Jett, Esther.



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