Our Story

Northcote is known for its strong sense of community connectedness, and Northcote Primary School has this in spades.

Over our 140 year history the school has evolved into a place where community matters and where our students continue to achieve academically. We are proud of our consistent teaching and learning and the high standards we set for our staff and students.

At our school we celebrate the individual. Our students are highly engaged. They are motivated and happy to be here. Every day our students show how much they care for each other – in both the classroom and the playground.

Northcote Primary School students come ready to learn and leave ready for the next adventure. They are encouraged and equipped to solve life’s challenges, which we know is a vital skill.

We are a welcoming school community. Strong relationships are a hallmark of our school – among students, parents, staff and within the Northcote community.

As a school we are doings lots of great work and we are always challenging ourselves to keep improving. We need to pause from time to time to reflect on our achievements and remember what makes Northcote Primary such a special place.

Our staff, School Council and broader school community are working together to support our students on their learning journey. We encourage parents to lend a hand and to continue to get actively involved in Northcote Primary School.
A Community of Learners

Northcote Primary School recognises the importance of equipping students with skills and abilities to achieve socially, academically and emotionally in today’s changing world. Students who feel safe, challenged and supported by a positive school environment are able to aspire to be the best they can.

**Creativity:** Stimulating curiosity and exploration by providing opportunities for choice, discovery and creative self-expression.

**Community:** Welcoming students, staff, families and friends by promoting a sense of belonging and sharing in our school.

**Respect:** Accepting and valuing ourselves and others and demonstrating this in our behaviour.

These values underpin a school environment and atmosphere where safety, caring attitudes, quality respectful relationships, consultative decision-making, and high education standards are encouraged.

Northcote Primary School is located in the inner northern suburb of Northcote and was first established in 1874. It retains the original Victorian and later Edwardian heritage brick buildings. Extensive refurbishments to original classrooms have created modern, flexible learning spaces in all areas. This has provided the environment to transform the teaching and learning practices in our school, to be far more suitable for today's teaching and learning needs. The pedagogical focus is to provide an inclusive teaching and learning program, with consistent, collaborative teaching (teacher teaming) to best meet the needs of all students and capitalise on the collective strengths of teams of teachers.

Synthetic turf for general play and basketball has enhanced the open play spaces. Extensive landscaping and attractive signage have improved the main entrances to the school. Maintaining the original buildings continues to be a community challenge that we strive to meet.

There are 376 students enrolled for the 2016 school year. Four Mod 5 relocatable classrooms are located on land adjacent to the school, accommodating our year 5/6s.

Our community of students, staff, families and friends provide a supportive learning environment, engaging our children in lifelong learning.

The school purpose is: We are here to help children to become literate and numerate and prepare them for life. The core values of the school are: creativity, respect and community.

The value of creativity is defined by the school community as: Stimulating curiosity and exploration as well as providing opportunities for choice, discovery and creative self-expression. Respect means accepting and valuing ourselves and others and demonstrating this in our behaviour; and Community at Northcote Primary School means welcoming students, staff, families and friends by promoting a sense of belonging and sharing in our school.

These values underpin a school environment and atmosphere where safety, caring attitudes, quality respectful relationships, consultative decision-making, and high educational standards are encouraged.

We have an enthusiastic and professional staff team and the school has a strong focus on teacher development. The school has a high Student Family Occupation (SFO) index of 0.2064, and the number of families with language backgrounds other than English is in the mid-high range. The school is diverse in population, with a mix of nationalities and socio-economic backgrounds. 22% of students are from families where at least one parent speaks a language other than English at home. We are a community mainly from the local Northcote and surrounding areas who value working together in partnership to achieve the best outcomes for all students.

We strive to build and maintain a community of learners – students, parents and staff – learning, working and sharing together. We recognize the importance of equipping students with skills and abilities to achieve socially, academically and emotionally in today’s changing world. Students who feel safe, challenged and supported by a positive school environment are able to aspire to be the best they can.

Students are provided with a wide range of personal, academic and practical experiences. Northcote Primary School is committed to ensuring that improved student learning is the highest priority. This is achieved by providing a comprehensive learning program based on the Victorian Curriculum with specialist programs in the Arts, Physical Education, and Italian Language. By focusing on the aptitude and interests of each individual student, the school provides a learning environment which ensures students have every opportunity to reach their potential.
Improving Student Learning

To enable students to be the best they can requires a teaching and learning culture that helps students to become independent thinkers who can take risks and believe in their own abilities.

Teachers work collaboratively in teams to plan, teach and assess student learning. We utilize a range of teaching strategies to engage and challenge, including direct instruction, targeted support and extension, like-groups, and fluid groups.

We have high expectations of what all students are capable of. We develop authentic relationships with our students, which increases student confidence and curiosity, and energises their commitment to learning.

Teachers assess student learning to identify how well a student has learnt the specified content and what to teach them next.

Assessment occurs continuously and in different ways, such as observation, testing, questioning and student work moderation.

Past to Present

Northcote Primary School is in the inner northern suburb of Northcote and was established in 1874. We have a long and proud history and our school is housed in the original Victorian and Edwardian buildings. We currently have 376 students and enrolments have grown in the past few years. In 2016 there are 16 generalist teachers and specialist teachers in Language—Italian, Physical Education, and Visual & Performing Arts.

Creating The Learning

The learning spaces have been designed to promote flexibility and support the teaching and learning practices in our school, to be more suitable for today’s teaching and learning needs. In our learning communities, teachers work together to ensure learning occurs in a range of places and spaces, and through flexible and dynamic grouping of students.

In our learning areas you will see small groupings of students, larger whole group assembly, independent project investigations, collaborative work, student-led learning, and teacher facilitated learning.

We have a strong focus on purposeful learning, where students understand the learning intention and know how and when they have been successful.

Teachers work in professional learning teams to meet the learning needs of all students and to foster collaboration, innovation and improvement. Observing colleagues teaching, teacher mentoring, and coaching are all highly valued practices we are engaged in throughout the year.
Laying the Foundations: Prep to Year 4

The first years of school are a critical period of transition, learning, and developing social awareness. Our prep year begins with high level support for our new students as they adjust and adapt to school life. They are supported by their Year 6 buddies who act as a ‘big sister or brother’ presence in these first weeks of school.

In these foundational years the curriculum focuses on developing the fundamental knowledge, skills and behaviours in literacy and numeracy and other areas including physical and social capacities which underpin all future learning.

We believe all children can succeed in literacy and numeracy given sufficient time and appropriate support. All students have daily learning sessions in literacy and numeracy and these may be in the form of small group instruction, partner or group work, or an investigation.

Student investigations or inquiries are teacher facilitated and encourage students to think and ask questions about ideas, concepts and processes they wish to explore further.

As students move through the learning process, they draw on different ways of investigating and expressing their growing understandings—integrating skills and content from multiple disciplines or key learning areas.

We continue to develop and refine our teaching and learning models, to ensure they reflect the needs of all students and are responsive to current issues and events in everyday life.

We value the importance of learning through play. Students in Prep to Year 2 have a weekly session in our historic Hall where they learn to interact, socialise and communicate appropriately whilst engaged in a range of activities from building using construction blocks, to drama through dressing up and making and performing a play. This program also supports and enhances oral language development and focuses on practicing core values such as sharing, co-operating and taking turns.

Our Year 3/4 students deepen their connection to school and their role within it through the sustainability program. The program promotes co-operative learning and leadership, and develops understanding of sustainability practices such as water conservation and recycling.

“The questions young people ask remind us that the search for meaning is fundamental to what it is to be human. The urge to inquire activates thinking on many levels and in many forms. When we seek to make sense of the world around us, we wonder, we plan, we analyse, we create, we reflect. At its very heart, inquiry is all about thinking—thinking in order to make meaning.”

Kath Murdoch, education consultant and inquiry learning expert

Building Breadth & Depth: Year 5 & 6 (Senior Campus)

In these years students progress beyond the foundations and their literacy and numeracy becomes more developed. An expanded curriculum program provides the basis for in-depth learning within all curriculum areas.

Students are eager to achieve and develop a deeper interest in decision-making. Student action teams are a key learning and engagement focus for our Year 5 and 6 students. Students investigate authentic projects based within the school and local community. With teacher guidance and direction, students research and implement diverse projects such as writing and publishing a student magazine, running healthy food days, researching species survival and taking classes across the school.
The Arts

Ensuring a wide range of opportunities for students’ creative expression is a high priority at Northcote Primary School. Visual arts are explored for every year and performing arts are a focus every second year. All students participate in weekly arts sessions and these are complemented by annual concerts, assembly items, cultural performances, excursions/incursions, choir, art walk exhibitions, the bi-annual school production and participation in the artists in schools program. Students also join the State Schools Spectacular in the alternate year.

Language—Italian

We recognise that learning another language enhances students’ understanding of and provides insights into their own language, whilst deepening their understanding of their other languages.

All students participate in weekly Italian language sessions that immerse them in the Italian language and culture. An annual highlight is our participation in the Dante Aligheri Society poster competition where our students excel in expressing their creativity and language understanding. Every two years we celebrate Italian language and culture in a whole school day of everything Italian—music, dance, visual art, sports and food. Bellissimo!

Physical Education

The students’ daily program incorporates a focus on health, healthy eating and exercise.

Students develop a broad range of movement skills, personal and social skills, knowledge, motivation and confidence to engage in health activity throughout their lives.

All students participate in a weekly specialist physical education and sports program.

Students in Years 5-6 participate in inter-school sport. There are also many opportunities for students from all levels, who excel to participate in district up to state level events. Our annual whole school athletics day celebrates everyone having a go, and has events such as simple relays and ball games to vortex throw and traditional track and field sports.

Swimming programs are provided to meet the different developmental and skill needs of Prep-6 students, from water awareness, stroke development and life-saving skills.

Specialist Learning

Extra-Curricular Programs

We have many opportunities for students to get involved in extra-curricular activities:

- Before & After School Programs
- Creative Melody’s Instrumental Music Program—a user pay program that includes singing, performing and experiencing structured lessons for foundational instrument music skill development.
- Kelly Sports—a user pay, after school, sports program for P-4 students.
- Year 1-2 overnight camp
- Year 3-4 and Year 5-6 three day camps
Creating a Strong Parent-School Community

We are a community of learners—students, parents and staff—learning, working and sharing together.

Every day, parents are involved across the school, supporting students and teachers in the learning program, or supporting the school by providing expertise in a particular area of need.

Our school council supports the work of the school by providing expertise and views on behalf of the school community.

We value opportunities where teachers and parents can get to know each other and look forward to annual social gatherings such as the Twilight Picnic and the Fete. Parents are welcome to visit learning areas to share and celebrate the learning achievements and efforts of students during regular learning expos or showcases.

Together we endeavor to develop and support students to be literate, numerate and curious and active with a vibrant and engaged community.

Engaging Parents in Children’s Learning

We work in partnership with parents regarding children’s wellbeing and learning progress.

In term 1, teaching teams meet with parents to explain and discuss the learning programs and approaches for the year. A written report is provided at the end of term 2 and term 4 and parents are invited to meet with teachers after student-led conferences.

The reports outline achievements, areas requiring improvement and/or future learning, and how you can help at home. The reports rate your child’s progress against statewide standards communicating student achievement.

Parents can choose between Parent/Teacher interviews, or student-led conferences where students explain and discuss with their parents and teacher their learning achievements, as well as areas for further improvement. They use samples of their work to demonstrate their learning progress across the semester and to clarify what they have learnt, how they have learnt it and what challenges they faced in the process. These conferences are structured according to age and year level, with student involvement increasing with age or that may involve the students in discussing their achievements/goals.

Of course, these aren’t the only times you might communicate with your child’s teachers. This would also occur outside the formal reporting structure.

Each teaching team also emails information about teaching and learning programs to parents. This is in the form of a regular team newsletter or email.
**Student Voice**

Prep to Year 6 student representatives are elected by their peers to Junior School Council and meet regularly to discuss and problem-solve school issues that are important to them.

Students are routinely asked to provide constructive feedback to each other and staff on a range of issues from improving learning to who gets to play on the turf and when!

**Student Leadership**

We value and promote leadership activities that are meaningful and that carry a level of responsibility for students.

All learning areas provide opportunities for students to play a key role in caring for and maintaining the learning ‘neighbourhood’.

The Year 5-6 Buddy Program provides essential “transition to school” support for our new preps and develops a sense of pride and responsibility in our senior students.

Every year a group of Grade 6 children are selected to attend the National Young Leaders Conference at which they get to speak and listen to varying speakers across many different career paths.

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**Student Transition**

The move from kindergarten to primary school and then primary to secondary school creates big changes in a child’s life, development and education. We believe a positive transition provides a smooth start to learning, and social and emotional wellbeing.

All parents and children starting prep the following year, attend our Ready, Set, Go! Program in November and December. This is a valuable opportunity to become familiar with the school environment, meet some of our teachers, and possible classmates for the following year. The program consists of three morning sessions and includes concurrent information sessions for parents.

For the move from primary to secondary school, our Year 6 teachers and Year 6-7 Coordinator prepare students throughout their final year. Past students visit our school and lead discussions around expectations and strategies for adjusting to the change. We have strong links with Northcote High School and our students are involved in interschool learning and activities wherever possible.

We ensure all parents have full knowledge of the process involved and are guided by the Year 6-7 Transition Coordinator.

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**Home Learning**

All students undertake tasks at home each week. Generally, home learning tasks relate to the skills, processes and understandings that are the current learning focus at school and are developmentally appropriate, and do not require new learning but practise of skills learnt in class.

Home learning complements and reinforces classroom learning, fosters good lifelong study habits, and provides an opportunity for students to further develop responsibility for their own learning.

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**Student Wellbeing**

Our engagement and wellbeing approach is based on the following principles: the right to learn, the right to be respected, and the right to be safe. We also teach students about responsibilities—personal responsibility (I do the right thing), and communal responsibility (I encourage others to do the right thing).

All students have weekly sessions in building social and resilience skills through the Bounce Back Program (Dr. Helen McGrath), the implementation of the developmental approach to classroom behavior (Associate Professor Ramon Lewis).