

Furlong Park
School for Deaf Children



Together we learn and grow

Vision

Furlong Park School for Deaf Children provides a supportive learning environment that promotes the development of individuals. We foster students' personal, social and academic growth, independence and self-worth by valuing creativity and acceptance of all learning styles.

Values

We believe that:

- *Learning is a shared responsibility where staff, parents, speech pathologists, audiologists and students are partners in education
- *Students and staff work best in a supportive environment characterised by friendly, interactive relationships, team cohesion and flexible purposeful leadership
- *Learning involves acquiring knowledge and skills through a range of creative pathways. Learning also involves the process of retaining, organising and applying knowledge and skills.
- *Development of language fluency, literacy, numeracy and community links (both Deaf and hearing) has central importance in the curriculum
- *Responsibility, initiative, creativity, independence and interdependence, care and respect for others are to be valued
- *The environment should support and value diversity and individual differences in gender, culture, family structures, backgrounds and lifestyles.

Context

School Profile

Furlong Park School for Deaf Children provides educational programs for Deaf children and children with partial hearing loss, including those with additional needs, from the Northern and Western Regions of Metropolitan Melbourne and the rural fringe. Situated in Sunshine North, the school provides programs for children from age 3 years to 13 years. Children are officially ungraded however grouping does occur that follows the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's stages of learning including Early Education, Early Years and Middle Years.

Students and families have access to a range of additional support services and programs which include Speech Pathology, Occupational Therapy (consultancy), Physiotherapy (consultancy), Social Work support for families, Guidance / Psychological support, Auslan instruction for parents / families from the school community and school staff. Parenting programs such as "Who's the boss?", "Cool Kids- Cool Parents" and "Communicating with your Deaf Child"- are offered when the need arises.

Enrolment is based on Departmental eligibility requirements and is subject to Regional approval.

The nature of our intake is changing each year and this diversity means that we must continue to reflect on the best pedagogical practices that enable us to meet the needs of our students. This encompasses the essential learnings of personal development, social and emotional skills and identity as well as teaching and learning in a more academic arena.

Guiding Principles.

The philosophy of our setting recognises each student's ability to learn. This occurs in a flexible, caring and positive environment with each student being encouraged to achieve his/her personal best. To promote effective learning for all students, we encourage and value active parent participation.

The Early Learning Centre program operates under early childhood guidelines:

Provision of a supportive & stimulating where children -

- *have opportunities to experience, explore and experiment through a play based approach
- *learn how to make decisions and choices, to deal with conflict and to follow directions
- * have individual language needs for speech, listening, lip-reading and signing (Auslan) addressed
- *develop self-discipline through guidance, positive reinforcement & encouragement

The School Area provides programs for all students to:

- *develop all communication skills, including listening, speaking & signing
- *develop literacy & numeracy skills
- *have access to appropriate and comprehensive learning experiences
- *develop effective social skills and acceptable behaviours
- *experience success and enjoyment in learning.

Curriculum

Furlong Park provides broad based programs to cater for the individual needs of each student in both the Early Learning Centre program and the School Area.

Development of language and communication skills is a priority across the curriculum with speech development an ongoing component of the classroom programs. Each student has access to speech therapy within the class group and an individual speech therapy session which must be attended by a family member. Programs in Auslan (LOTE) and Deaf Studies play significant roles in supporting language development, access to the curriculum and personal growth.

Optimum amplification for each student is provided and is supported by audiologists from Australian Hearing who attend fortnightly. The school liaises with the Cochlear Implant Clinic on a regular basis.

Early Learning Centre

This program provides a quality play-based developmental program reflecting early childhood principles and guidelines. The program is

designed to consider and enhance the developmental needs of each child in relation to:

- *physical development
- *cognitive development
- *emotional development
- *social development
- *language development

The ELC offers programs for three to five year old children including those with additional needs, for up to five days per week. Staffing includes both teachers and teacher aide support (Deaf and hearing). In addition the staff work closely with a speech pathologist, who provides speech and language sessions for our children. Additional support is provided on a consultancy basis for physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

The play based three year old program provides an excellent introduction to parent separation, positive interaction with peers, routines, self- help skills and individual and small group language sessions.

The two year program provides children with both structured learning in a small group setting focusing on language and early literacy and numeracy, as well as a play based program where they are integrated with the younger children. Children work with a speech pathologist once a week developing language as well as receiving an individual speech session attended with parents. Excursions may also be incorporated within the program, providing first hand experiences to learn new concepts and language, and consolidate children's prior understanding.

Primary School

The school program is based on the implementation of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards and the sixteen Habits of Mind with biannual Individual Learning Plans developed for all students. Programs cater for ongoing language development in both Auslan and English with a focus on developing literacy and numeracy through an integrated approach to the curriculum. Specialist areas included ICT and Library, PE, The Arts and LOTE/Auslan.

Students With Additional Needs.

Students with additional learning disabilities have particular needs additional to, and different from, a child with a hearing loss. These students are catered for through a program, where the focus is directed to catering for their exceptional needs. The program, whilst based on the VELs, is more focused on independent living skills.

Transition

Transition opportunities are available on five levels -

- *Home/early intervention to ELC
- *ELC to primary school
- *Furlong Park to secondary college
- *Between Furlong Park and mainstream settings
- *Between mainstream settings and Furlong Park.

Transport

Students are transported to and from Furlong Park by buses resourced by the Department of Education and Early Childhood.

Auslan Classes.

Auslan instruction is available for family members through day and evening classes, tuition within the home and the provision of Auslan resources. Furlong Park has maintained the provision of free classes for parents of students attending Furlong Park.

Facilities

Our Early Learning Centre is located separately from the main school area. It is fully equipped to meet the developmental needs of very young students. The Early Learning Centre area incorporates facilities for administration, play-based learning and storage.

The physical environment of the school is well developed with modern buildings and extensive play areas. Buildings are comprised of acoustically designed learning areas, modern administration facilities and

purpose-built rooms for use by visiting paramedical and resource services. Special purpose classroom areas include Visual Arts, Performing Arts , Multi-Purpose and well-appointed Technology Centre and Library.

Future Directions

The school community will continue to address current educational issues and their implications in reviewing policies and programs for deaf and hearing impaired students. Through participation in professional learning and further study, staff will continue to develop skills and expertise.

The School Community is committed to improving language competency levels of all students. Our language philosophy has developed into a model based on bilingual, bicultural practices where the individual language and communication needs of each individual, whether Auslan or spoken English, are met. English is vital to the development of literacy. Deaf studies and LOTE (Auslan) continue to be incorporated into the curriculum to support the cultural and linguistic development of students. Varied additional activities enhance this curriculum provision.

The School Community is committed to improving literacy and numeracy levels of all students. Strategies to facilitate this include implementation of developmental programs, clear targets and the use of appropriate intervention & support structures and appropriate professional learning for staff.

The School Community promotes the Early Learning Centre as a provider of appropriate developmental programs reflecting the guidelines as outlined by the Department of Human Services (Victoria) while operating under a Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) structure. The ELC Program will continue to access early childhood support services provided by both government & non-government agencies.

The School Community recognises that we are in a period of significant change in education of deaf students in Australia and is committed to the provision of quality educational and community services for deaf and hearing impaired students to ensure that the best possible educational opportunities are provided for our students.