

Junior Years

Curriculum Overview



As a critical transition point between the Early Years (P-4), and Year 8, the Junior Years Mini School has a particular focus upon the social and emotional preparedness for students to meet the rigours of a strong academic and community minded program. This demands high expectations, innovative teaching, and a calm and orderly environment in order to maximise opportunities and provide the necessary preconditions for student growth. This period of schooling, referred to as the Junior Years, coincides with early adolescence. This is a time that represents an important stage in a student's development.

At Mount Ridley Prep – 12 College, we recognise that these are the years when experiencing positive relationships and being genuinely engaged in learning and developing high self-esteem have a major and lasting impact on each young person.

The Junior Years Mini School is divided into two main learning areas, the Year 5 and 6 students that occupy our Midland Building and the Year 7 students that work in the Paddington Building. All students have access to a range of subject areas which build on skills and content gained in the preceding years of learning. The teaching and learning program for Junior Years Mini School students is based on the understanding that all individuals have distinct learning styles that influence their ability to learn, process, practise and retain new and different information. The Junior Years Mini School program is specifically designed to bridge the social and academic gap between traditional primary school and secondary schools.

Curriculum

The Teaching and Learning program across our Junior Years Mini School involves explicit instruction in content as well as integrated projects that develop links across key learning areas. Students undertake the following core areas of study:

Core Subjects

Mathematics and Science

The traditional subjects of Mathematics and Science are closely linked in the Junior Years Mini School. Mathematics and Science are explicitly taught separately, however Mount Ridley students are encouraged to make connections and links across these two areas of learning. Living successfully in a complex world requires confident problem solving skills, both of which are nurtured in these subjects. Numeracy competency is both a daily essential and an enriching asset. Junior Years students build on basic concepts and develop an ability to explore abstract notions of number representation and calculation. All learning activities in Mathematics and Science are designed to be hands on and provide opportunities to apply knowledge to real life situations.

All students in the Junior Years Mini School have access to the online tuition program Mathletics. Mathletics can be accessed both at school and at home. Students have an individual account and can build skills and compete individually and in classes with students from other schools, both nationally and internationally. Mathletics is designed to enhance and develop students understanding and ability in all areas of Mathematics.

English and Humanities

Literacy is at the heart of students' ability to learn and succeed in school and beyond. Having a secure confidence in their ability to use and decode language accurately and articulately enriches opportunities for students to express themselves creatively. Key features of the Junior Years literacy program include wider reading, critical reading, oral skills and writing practice. Every staff member has a commitment to extending literacy across the curriculum. In daily English classes students engage in explicit grammar and spelling lessons and activities alongside sessions which encourage the analysis of texts, films and arguments. In both Years 5/6 and 7 students engage in speeches and presentation to also build their speaking and listening skills. All Junior Years students participate in a fortnightly library program, where they learn how to access the library Dewey system and to borrow regularly. Humanities combines the traditional subjects of History and Geography. In Humanities class students develop their communication skills and apply their knowledge of sources, countries and maps to case studies to contextualize their place in their world.

Health and Physical Education

Physical Education contributes to the overall education of young people by helping them to lead full and valuable lives through engaging in purposeful physical activity. The Physical Education program provides each student with the personal attributes and skills essential for their physical development. In addition, they gain the ability to move with competence and confidence and strive towards becoming lifelong participants in regular physical activity. The Health component addresses the students' physical, social and emotional needs.

Languages

In Years 5 & 6, students study one semester each of Italian and Japanese. This enables them to gain knowledge and appreciation of these languages and cultures. In Year 7, students then select one of these languages, which they continue to study until Year 9.

Specialist Subjects

Junior Years Mini School students also study elective subjects that aim to provide them with a wide range of learning experiences. These subjects are one semester in duration and focus on the learning areas of The Arts and Design, Creativity and Technology. The elective subjects undertaken by students in the Junior Years Mini School are:

Years 5 & 6

- **Art**
- **Performing Art**
- **Food Technology**
- **Design and Technology**

Year 7

- **Visual Art**
- **Performing Art**
- **Robotics**
- **Materials and Design**

Mentor Program

The Junior Years Mini School has a unique Pastoral Care program that enables staff to cater for the needs of the young people. Each student is a member of a Mentor Group and is cared for by a Mentor teacher. These teachers have a significant amount of contact time per week with their students, including Mentor sessions. A variety of topics are covered within these sessions, which encourage students to take responsibility, develop resilience and build relationships. Throughout the year students will engage in weekly mentor sessions which cover such important topics as:

- Exploring the College Values;
- Effective communication;
- Managing conflict and friendships;
- Identifying and managing stress; and
- Building bonds with peers.

Mentor teachers are the first point of contact between school and home. They are responsible for the general wellbeing of the students in their Mentor class. Teachers are well informed of the individual needs of students. They liaise with parents and other staff members to ensure that the students' individual needs are addressed.

Support & Withdrawal Programs

Mount Ridley College recognises that students often require a little support or extension in some areas of their learning. Students attending the College in the Junior Years have access to the following support programs:

- EAL: Students who qualify for this withdrawal program have English as an Additional Language. They attend levelled withdrawal classes run by a specialist EAL teacher several times a week.
- Corrective Reading: Students are referred to this program when teachers identify they struggle with the decoding of text. Staff trained in the program will then conduct a series of diagnostic assessments of the students to ascertain their eligibility for the program. Students who attend the program do so typically for four half hour sessions per week. Students can move up levels until they graduate from the program.