



# POPLARS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CENTRE



## INFORMATION HANDBOOK

TENISON WOODS COLLEGE • MOUNT GAMBIER



## Welcome

A warm welcome to the Tenison Woods College Poplars Inclusive Education Centre.

At Tenison Woods College we say every child has a place, every child has a pathway, and every child will SHINE. That is our daily challenge and our daily celebration.

Schooling is one of the most significant phases of children's lives. To make this a wonderful experience for every child, this involves a very close partnership between parents and our school staff.

You have entrusted your precious gift from God to our care and we appreciate the aspirations you have for your child at this significant time of their developmental journey. We also appreciate the trust that you have shown in us to care for your most precious gift, and understand the significant responsibility this involves.

Tenison Woods College provides a carefully structured and innovative approach to education, focusing on accentuating the physical, intellectual, spiritual, social and emotional development of each child. Poplars provides Australian Curriculum modified to the individual student. There is plenty of hands on learning plus many life experiences lived daily. A significant feature of the Poplars Inclusive Education Centre is the emphasis on quality teaching and learning in a safe, supportive learning environment that acknowledges the innate competence of each individual child and, where each child is encouraged to flourish in developing as a successful learner.

The partnerships that you begin to develop here will over time become lifelong relationships which are trusting, caring and honest. We look forward to the many conversations we will have with you and your child over the years to come, and anticipate that this support will ensure that your child enjoys success and fulfilment in their learning, so that they, according to our school motto, 'Let Their Light Shine.'

Marcellin Champagnat, the founder of the Marist Order once said "Before you can teach children, first you must love them." This great love is expressed through our love of Christ, our love of learning and our love of celebrating all the great things that happen in our classrooms, our school and our community.

Remember that your child's teachers are always available to assist you throughout the year. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to ask them for assistance.

Thank you for choosing Tenison Woods College for your child.  
We look forward to a long and happy association with your family.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Mezinec".

David Mezinec  
Principal



# About Tenison Woods College

## OUR VISION

The Tenison Woods College community lets its light shine for the world through faith and action.

## MISSION

To provide a welcoming and inclusive Catholic education and care for all in our community, following Christ as our Light in the spirit of our Founders.

## ABOUT US

Tenison Woods College is a Catholic Co-educational College, offering comprehensive and tailored education experiences to children from Early Learning to Year 12.

The College is situated on picturesque grounds at the foot of the Valley Lakes on the western outskirts of Mount Gambier. Students come to our school from all across the South East and from across the border in Victoria, as well as students from overseas, bringing their unique personalities, perspectives and experiences into our culturally enriched community.

The College was named after Father Julian Edmond Tenison Woods who arrived in the South East of South Australia in 1857. He quickly established a Catholic identity in the area and initiated the system of Catholic Education.

Tenison Woods College was formed in 2001 following the merging of St Paul's Primary School and Tenison College (secondary school). Both of these schools had proud reputations, with an excellent record of student achievement and care for individuals.

Tenison Woods College offers:

- Individual academic support through quality teaching
- Catholic faith and leadership
- State-of-the-art facilities and resources
- Innovation and technology in all aspects of school life
- A strong focus on the Performing Arts

The College is divided into three sub-schools (Junior, Middle and Senior) and even though each sub-school has their own distinct learning precincts, our students enjoy a united community that encourages friendships, monitoring and role modelling. The Poplars Inclusive Education Centre learning community spans across all three sub-schools and students are part of their respective sub-school, where they are involved in the activities with their mainstream peers. Poplars students graduate with their peers, so the building of connections throughout their schooling is very important.



At Tenison Woods College we celebrate the rich history of the Mercy, Marist and Josephite Traditions, from which the school claims its heritage. It is through our charisma that our culture develops and becomes a living faith.

Catherine McAuley was the founder of the Mercy religious Order. The Mercy Tradition centres on not just doing works of mercy, but having a merciful heart, a heart that responds to need (the lonely, helpless, disadvantaged, on the edge of society) with compassion, care and love. The sisters of Mercy began teaching in Mount Gambier in 1880 and moved into the Penola Road Convent in 1908. The sisters taught for many years at St Paul's School.

St Marcellin Champagnat was a French priest who, in 1817, founded the Marist religious Order. He trained young men to become teachers in France initially, then sent Brothers to many other countries. The Marist Tradition centres on simplicity, as well as a special love of family and Mary, the Mother of Jesus. The Marist Brothers began teaching at the College site in 1931. Father Julian Tenison Woods was a priest, scientist and educator, who worked in the South East. Together with Mary MacKillop, he opened our area's first Catholic school in Penola in 1866. He was a man of great vision, action, compassion and respect for the environment.

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop founded the Sisters of St Joseph with Father Julian Tenison Woods in Penola in 1866, to meet the need of Catholic Education for the poor children of the bush. The Josephite Tradition centres on generosity, faith, courage, prayer and trust in God. Mary was a great and courageous woman who lived her life in service to others. Each year we celebrate our Founders with a Whole School Mass or Founder Liturgies, where we gather together and give thanks for their lives and influences, praying that they continue to inspire and encourage us every day.

Our College Houses are based on the four Founders: each student is allocated a House when they enrol, with family members being placed together in the same House. Students' Sports polo shirts incorporate their House colour.

Our four Founder Houses are:

- McAuley (red)
- Champagnat (green)
- Woods (yellow)
- MacKillop (blue)



# Poplars Inclusive Education Centre



## ABOUT US

The Poplars Inclusive Education Centre is part of the Gilap Wanga Learning Community at Tenison Woods College. The Poplars provides a safe and personalised space for students with significant needs, requiring an individualised program. An inclusive life skills based curriculum is designed for students diagnosed with a disability, complex learning needs or identified socio-learning need. Within The Poplars Inclusive Education Centre there are three classes catering for approximately 40 students. The centre is wheelchair friendly and easily accessible.

### Individualised and Connected

The Poplars Inclusive Education Centre recognises the worth and uniqueness of each student. Emphasis is placed upon planning and implementing programs based on individual need, supporting your child to be the best they can be in the world. The Poplars program prides itself on building the confidence and self worth of students who graduate with the skills and attitudes to be successful happy members of the community.

All students have the opportunity to access lessons with their mainstream peers. The aim is for all students to access areas of the College curriculum where they feel comfortable. For some students this is achieved quickly and for others it takes time to get settled and accustomed to the routines of school.

### Individual Education Plans

Students in The Poplars Inclusive Education Centre have diagnosed disabilities, generally Intellectual Disability and Autism, and find it difficult to cope in the mainstream setting. Each student has Individual Education Plans which are carefully prepared by their teacher in consultation with families. The special education staff meet regularly with families to ensure that the expectations and needs of all involved are being met.

### Committed Staff

Our caring and committed staff ensure your child's learning, wellbeing and individual needs are catered for daily. The centre

is managed by the centre's Coordinators. Each class has a Specialist Core Teacher who is ably supported by additional Education Support Officers in line with the needs of the children in the class.

Students learn the basics of reading, writing and maths, with the core capabilities taken from the Australian Curriculum.

As students progress to the senior years we aim for our students to complete a modified SACE.

The Poplars Inclusive Education Centre is supported by the wider community through:

- Community Health
- Speech and OT Departments
- Autism SA
- Down Syndrome SA
- South Australian School for Vision Impaired
- Catholic Education SA Support – Disability Consultant
- Behaviour Education Consultants
- Private practitioners sourced by families through their NDIS package

### Daily Timetable

8:35am	<i>First Bell</i>	12:00pm	Lesson 5
8:40am	Pastoral Care	12:40pm	Lesson 6
8:55am	Lesson 1	1:20pm	<i>Lunch</i>
9:35am	Lesson 2	2:00pm	Lesson 7
10:15am	Lesson 3	2:40pm	Lesson 8
10:55am	<i>Recess</i>	3:20pm	End of Day
11:20am	Lesson 4		

### Uniform Requirements

Poplars' Students are required to wear the Tenison Woods College Uniform. There is an on-site uniform shop, with online ordering available. Please refer to the Uniform page on the website for the Uniform Handbook, for further information.



# The Three Pillars

## FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY

As a Co-educational Catholic College, Tenison Woods College provides a Christian environment where the values of the Gospel are proclaimed and encouraged. Students are invited to engage in a new conversation between the world they know and the faith to which they are called. Children's spirituality is seen as an open and curious attitude and natural wondering about the mysteries of our being and becoming, and it is in this openness and wonder that they experience God's grace in their lives. Each child is invited by the College's nurturing faith environment to explore and express his or her spirituality in a personal faith journey.

Poplars students are actively involved in daily classroom prayer, with Liturgies occurring weekly and Masses being held each term. Students are involved in planning weekly Liturgies, and all students are encouraged to participate fully in the Chapel experience.

Students are encouraged to 'live out' their faith and explore opportunities to work in partnership with various community groups. Individual classes may also instigate fundraising activities to support local aid agencies as well as Caritas Australia. We have a very strong relationship with our local chapter of St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Our College community gathers together once a term for a Whole School Mass, where we celebrate our faith and thank God for the many blessings that come our way throughout the year. Parents and members of the wider College community are warmly invited to attend our Liturgies and Masses and share in the celebrations.

## STUDENT WELLBEING

Student wellbeing is of the highest importance in the Poplars Inclusive Education Centre. College staff are committed to the care and wellbeing of each student, helping them to feel that they belong to the school community and have the fullest possibility for personal, social, academic and spiritual growth. Children's growth and development is viewed as holistic; one area of development is not emphasised over another.

Mental health and wellbeing are vital for learning and life; children who are mentally healthy learn better, benefit from life experiences and have stronger relationships with family members, school staff and peers. A child's family is the first and biggest influence on their mental health and the College works closely with families to help build children's self esteem and sense of competence.

A variety of social skills programs are explicitly taught in each class, with students receiving additional support from our Counsellors when needed.

Students learn to exercise personal responsibility and to gradually take control of their own learning.



# Life Skills and Community Engagement

## CURRICULUM

The Poplars Inclusive Education Centre personalises each student's curriculum by offering a pathway to engage in learning that is designed for their exact point of need and in line with each child's interests and long term goals.

Each learner's education team, alongside with parents and caregivers, personalise a pathway that is supportive, captivating, joyful and in line with the student and working towards their ideal self.

The Poplars' curriculum prepares our students for the outside world. We have a strong focus on life skills and all students are involved in many life skills activities from Reception right through until they graduate in Year 12. Life skills activities include cooking, gardening, community engagement, animal experiences, work place skills and work experience.

On top of the strong focus on life skills, students have the opportunity to take part in mainstream elective subjects in the Middle and Senior School and can be hosted in a Junior School class. This has many benefits for our students as it allows them to make social connections with their peers. Through these experiences students are also exposed to a range of learning opportunities and connections.

## COOKING

The Poplars Inclusive Education Centre has a purpose built kitchen where students are able to learn the basics of food preparation and cooking. Each class has at least one dedicated cooking lesson per week, where students learn the skills to use the kitchen independently, starting with making toast right through to cooking meals and preparing food for others. Students are expected to do these tasks as independently as possible right from the start of their journey at Tenison Woods College and are encouraged to practice at home. As well as the practical skills learnt through the cooking process, students learn to read recipes, use measurement and time. Alongside the formal cooking program, students have the opportunity to shop for the weekly cooking lessons and research to find the best value for money options through catalogues.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Tenison Woods College has a strong commitment to environmental stewardship and ecological conversion. The College has an innovative program called *Project Recology* where students are involved in repurposing recyclable plastics into useful items such as bowls, skateboards, jewellery and larger items such as tables, benches and stools. Students are involved in this program in many ways, including sorting the bottle tops, melting plastic, creating and selling items and shredding plastics. This program builds an understanding of sustainability, ecology, business and enterprise.

Students are also involved in the process of collecting and recycling the College's green waste. The College has an industrial compost machine which makes compost for use in the school and wider communities gardens. Students are involved in the process of collecting and processing the green waste as well as marketing and selling the produce. Over the past two years students have managed to save approximately 10 tonnes of green waste entering landfill.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A large focus of the Poplars' program is students participating in activities in the community where they are able to make meaningful contributions to the wider community.

The younger students are involved in a project with the Mount Gambier City Council where they are in charge of a space in the Valley Lake Wildlife Park. The older classes have a partnership with ForestrySA where they plant trees in biodiversity corridors, map and mark ghost mushrooms, tidy and maintain recreational walking spaces and other general tasks in the ForestrySA forests. Students are also involved in gardening for the Ryder Cheshire Foundation where they visit weekly and maintain the gardens of the two community houses provided by the Foundation. In the warmer months, students spend time cleaning local beaches by collecting rubbish and broken glass.

## GARDENING

The Poplars has access to garden beds in the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program. Students are involved in regular gardening lessons where they learn about plant identification, planting plants and maintaining a garden. Students are also able to use the vegetables grown in their cooking lessons.

## COMMUNITY EXCURSIONS

Students are involved in weekly excursions throughout the community to introduce them to a range of locations they will access once they get older and leave school. Excursions include local supermarkets and shopping centres, Echo Farm, Millicent Museum, Public Library, playgrounds, Blue Lake, recreational walking trails, the Mount Gambier bowling alley and Tree House Adventure Centre.



# Curriculum and Facilities

## FACILITIES

The Poplars Inclusive Education Centre is a recently refurbished purpose built centre in the award winning Gilap Wanga precinct. The buildings overlook the Sugarloaf and Marist Park. The Poplars area has a purpose built kitchen, three classrooms and multiple breakout spaces. The outside area has a large undercover play area with therapy swings and a trampoline. There is also a large nature play space with trees, sandpit, water play and swings catering for the sensory needs of our students. Each classroom is equipped with the latest interactive whiteboards, laptops and iPads.

They also have access to breakout spaces, sensory boxes and a range of sensory toys and tools.

Within the kitchen area there is a functioning laundry where students learn to use the washer and dryer as well as other skills such as sewing, folding and ironing.

Staff are trained in incontinence care, with change facilities available if required. It is The Poplars aim to support children to become independent in this area where possible.

As well as the buildings and play spaces, The Poplars has access to two 22 seater buses as well as two 12 seater vans which allow our students to access many local excursions.

The Poplars students have access to all Tenison Woods College facilities including the Barrie Holmes Stadium, canteen and Sugarloaf Cafe (for senior students), Library, computer rooms, technology spaces, art room, kitchen facilities, the Project Recology Shed and play spaces.





# Enrolment Process

## TOUR

A tour is recommended for families interested in enrolling their child into our Poplars Inclusive Education Centre. The Poplars Coordinators will show families through the Centre and it is recommended that families visit with their child and whilst classes are taking place. The tour can be arranged by contacting the College Registrar.

## APPLICATION FOR ENROLMENT

The enrolment process for your child into The Poplars requires:

1. An application for enrolment to be completed
2. A copy of all diagnostic reports to accompany the enrolment form
3. A copy of the child's Birth Certificate
4. If any year level other than Reception, we will need a copy of the child's Individual Learning Plan and their last school report.

## THE NEXT STEP

Once enrolment forms have been submitted, The Poplars Coordinators will assess your child's application and assessments to ensure they meet the entry requirements into our Inclusive Education Centre. Your child will then be placed on a wait list and will be contacted when a position becomes available.

## TRANSITION

A Transition programme will be worked out to accommodate the students' needs and if possible, a weekly visit the term prior to commencement would be recommended. Our aim is to make the students' transition as smooth as possible to school.







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# Contact Us

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## ADDRESS

Cnr White Avenue & Shepherdson Road  
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## POSTAL ADDRESS

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Mount Gambier  
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## TELEPHONE

Early Learning and Community Centre (08) 8724 4656

Tenison Woods College (08) 8725 5455

Absentee Line (08) 8724 4659

College Uniform Shop (08) 8724 4637

## WEBSITE

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