

Accelerated Learning Class Policy



Rationale:

Teachers at Parktone do their best to teach a curriculum that all students can learn from. We aim to scaffold learning within Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. In any given class the zone of proximal development varies. For numerous and varied reasons, some students consistently demonstrate gaps in their learning far greater than their peers. Parktone teachers differentiate the curriculum as best they can, generally catering for students with a zone proximal development up to 18 months behind and 18 months in front of the year level they teach. Students aged as young as 9 and 10, whose zone of proximal development is not being catered for because their achievement levels are beyond the scope of differentiation, are of an age which is susceptible to being disheartened and disengaged in such circumstances. For these students, who often present with low levels of self confidence in their ability to learn, such circumstances, left unaddressed, can have a detrimental effect on their learning and who they are as a learner. Though recent studies by John Hattie have, somewhat controversially, declared that reducing class size has little to no effect on learning, the number by which a reduction is made is key to understanding the research. A small reduction in class size of 1 to 5 students typically fits with Hattie's conclusions; however the same research associates a significant reduction in class size as having a significant positive effect on learning. Class sizes of 20 and less (15 or less in remedial classes) are found to be ideal as they allow for a different approach in teaching than otherwise possible for a teacher. Such a class will enable students to achieve an average overall growth greater than 12 months in the space of 12 months.

Aims:

The Accelerated Learning Class aims to close some of the gaps in learning by teaching the students to achieve mastery over foundational concepts which have previously been misunderstood and increasing confidence in their ability as learners. The class aims to cater for students whose zone of proximal development is regularly beyond the scope of differentiation a teacher is able to offer in regular circumstances.

Implementation:

- A class of around 12 grade 5 and 6 students will form the Accelerated Learning Class each year.
- Parents will be given an opportunity to express interest in their child's enrolment in the Accelerated Class by the end of Term 3.
- Factors including student achievement data, current and past teacher recommendations, student well-being, expressions of interest from parents, student attitude toward learning and the social dynamics of a potential class are all considered before parents are contacted to discuss their child's eligibility for enrolment.
- A list of 20 students will be created from which the 12 most eligible students will be offered a place in the class. The remaining 8 students will be placed on a waiting list.
- Parents of eligible students and parents who have expressed an interest will be contacted and enrolments confirmed within the first two weeks of Term 4 to ensure due time is provided for regular class allocation.

- Enrolment in the class is to be confirmed by parents and if, at the time of enrolment, a parent decides they do not want their child in the Accelerate Learning Class, then the student will be allocated to a regular grade 5 or regular 6 class and a student on the waiting list will be offered a place.
- Throughout the year, student wellbeing, attitude and performance will be continually assessed to determine the ongoing suitability of the class. The school in conjunction with the parents may determine reallocation of a student to a regular class is in the best interest of the student or of the Accelerated Learning Class.
- The generalist teachers of the class will be provided with suitable professional development to equip them with evidence-based approaches to working with students who have additional learning needs, in a small class setting.
- Students within the Accelerated Learning Class will participate in all school based activities, specialist classes, camps etc, in a way that promotes inclusion and appreciation of diversity of learning for all students in the Parktone school community
- The generalist teacher is expected to provide evidence that students in their class achieve average overall growth of 18 months or more in a 12 month period.

Evaluation:

Policy to be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review process

This policy was last ratified by School Council in November 2016