



Supported Transition and Education Program

Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Bayside Christian College’s Vision and Mission is to partner with Christian parents in the nurture and preparation of young people for a life of responsive discipleship. At our core, we believe that each child is fearfully and wonderfully made and gifted in many ways. In line with this it is our, as it is God’s, desire to serve all the children *that we can*, including those with learning challenges.

Our Supported Transition and Education Program (STEP) aims to serve students with significant learning difficulties who find themselves increasingly in a grey area of education provision in schools in that, while they are not eligible (or suited) for enrolment at a Special School, they are unable to access the curriculum effectively in mainstream schools and thus find it difficult to maximise their learning in a mainstream classroom.

STEP recognises that the level of differentiation required for teachers to teach and for students to learn effectively increases across the primary years to a point where the differentiation gap becomes too large to effectively address particularly as they encounter the secondary years, even with significant Learning Aide Support.

Furthermore, the demands of the curriculum significantly increase as students enter and progress through secondary years of school, further exacerbating the problem as the learning gap increases.

STEP provides an alternative classroom setting and curriculum for students in Years 7-12 who have significant learning difficulties and thus are operating significantly below their Year level academically (4 or more years behind their peers). Running parallel to the Secondary Mainstream program, STEP focuses heavily on providing a space for the development and strengthening of numeracy and literacy skills while recognising the need for students to experience learning and build relationships with peers and teachers in mainstream classrooms where possible.

While the College would like to cater for all students with high learning needs, students who require support beyond what the STEP can provide to access the curriculum and learn would be disadvantaged. These students may be better suited to either a special school or a mainstream secondary school with greater capacity and resources, including substantial integration aide time.

Our STEP program has limitations on space, resources and trained personnel, when it comes to being able to accommodate students with significant behavioural, mental health, hygiene or self-care needs. We do not have a school nurse or a first-aid room which is adequately resourced to address more complex demands. The College's Code of Conduct is strictly enforced.

Non-academic services and therapy (such as speech and occupational therapy) are not provided by STEP and must be independently arranged by the parent. However, these providers are welcome to work with students on-site at the College where possible. Similarly, the College will partner with parents who choose to access NDIS funding to facilitate their child's learning at school.

Eligibility Criteria:

For a student to be eligible for this program, the following criteria must be met:

- The student is chronologically in Years 7-12 (Years 7/8 for the commencement of the program in 2022, then progressing through Secondary school).
- The student's academic functioning level is more than 4 years below his/her expected year level as indicated by the specialist report requirements below.
- The student's need is primarily academic and does not include significant emotional or behavioural concerns.
- The student's support level is classified as Extensive under NCCD.
- The student can function independently in integrated classes, such as P.E., and other electives as determined by the student's schedule. The student may use modifications/accommodations as needed for these electives as determined by the student's Individual Learning Plan.
- The student does not have any significant health related concerns that would require individual care above and beyond what is typically provided by the College.
- The student wants to join the program.

Specialist Report Requirements

- Before entering STEP, students will need to be assessed by a qualified educational psychologist to gain information about the student's academic, intellectual and adaptive behaviour functioning. This is to assist in assessing whether a student is able to be supported well by the STEP program.
- Supporting documentation from other professionals such as Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Psychiatrists, Doctors, Optometrists and Audiologists may also be required to assist in assessing whether a student is able to be supported well by the STEP

program. Previous school information such as past reports and Individual Learning Plans may also be required.

- Documentation provided meets the criteria for NCCD Extensive classification.
- Some students may be eligible for support through the “State Support Services” funding program administered by Independent Schools Victoria. Parents of eligible students must commit to supplying updated assessment reports when needed for reapplications for support.

The program structure is flexible and will be tailored to meet the students' needs. Formulating the best program structure for the students is seen to be a team effort which both values and requires input from parents and teachers. Previous testing or assessment data, reports from external professionals and the use of various assessment tools will also facilitate the design of the most appropriate curriculum for students engaging in the STEP program.

In our desire to do all things for the glory of God and to ensure that students learning can be maximised, the STEP staff will seek to:

- Obtain and review all pertinent data regarding your child’s educational history, evaluations and services provided in order to create the most appropriate Individual Learning Plan for your child. This plan may include student goals, accommodations, modifications, and other information that will communicate the methods by which progress will be made;
- Perform academic achievement assessments;
- Request further evaluation (information about suggested testing options can be provided);
- Provide academic and other necessary interventions and supports for your child in the STEP classroom and in the general education classroom;
- Advocate for your child with his/her other teachers;
- Communicate with you regularly regarding progress;
- Pray with and for your child;
- Form close partnerships with supporting professionals;

The base STEP curriculum is designed to strengthen the numeracy and literacy capacity of students, thereby fostering increasing independence in their learning as they progress through their respective year levels. When students are deemed to be ready and have acquired the relevant capacity needed, they are encouraged to step into mainstream classrooms as active learners.

Various Learning Pathways and curriculum designs are available from Year 10. Depending on student readiness, students will have the opportunity to begin to prepare themselves for life beyond school. Options include pursuing a trade or studying towards qualifications that will prepare them to become 'work ready'. Synchronised schedules will facilitate adequate and appropriate classroom time for STEP students to attend mainstream classes. The amount of time spent in the STEP homeroom will vary for each student and will be determined by the STEP Teacher in conjunction with subject teachers. One student might need assistance in only one particular subject area, while the STEP room may be the primary source of another child's instruction. The aim is to provide the student with all the individual attention they need and yet balance this with the opportunity for maximised social interaction with peers in the mainstream classroom.

STEP Curriculum:

While the objective is to provide students with a broad educational experience, the curriculum at STEP is underpinned by key curriculum areas of Numeracy, Literacy, Biblical Studies and Living in God's World (LIGW). Students will also have access to a range of electives and other curriculum areas (depending on readiness and capacity) to enhance their learning, which may include: Science, Humanities, Physical Education, Food Technology, Agriculture, and Art; to name a few.

Numeracy and Literacy: The foundation of the STEP program is the development of numeracy and literacy skills. A significant amount of time will be spent building the student's capacity in these areas.

Literacy:

The Literacy program focuses on two broad areas: Receptive Modes (Reading, Listening and Viewing) and Productive Modes (Writing, Speaking and Creating). Specific skill acquisition in oral reading, reading comprehension, spelling, writing and speaking & listening are explored and developed through practical and engaging individual and group activities. Students are given the opportunity to extend literacy skills and acquire strategies to support their own learning, leading to the functional use of their skills within the community.

Numeracy:

The Numeracy course incorporates skills practice, real-life applications and project work. Students will develop numeracy skills that assist them to make sense of their every-day personal and public lives. The lessons emphasise the importance of using concrete materials and making numeracy relevant to everyday situations, with a particular focus on solving practical problems, using all four operations, financial literacy and competence, and the concept of time.

LIGW - Living in God's World:

The LIGW course provides students with a range of experiences to help them engage confidently in the world. Students will be given the opportunity to learn and be confident with engaging with the world through a range of activities from volunteering to shopping, or planning and undertaking trips into town to see a show.

These activities aim to develop personal and social capabilities equipping students' readiness for social integration and competence in real-life situations, including the workplace. Students will build their self-awareness, self-management and social awareness in an interactive approach. Students will have the opportunity to practise and apply responsible decision making in a variety of social and vocational contexts.

Biblical Studies:

The Biblical Studies program seeks to help students explore their faith and how it is outworked as responsive disciples in the world today. Biblical Studies aims to help students understand who God is in their lives, what it means to live a godly life and how to inculcate daily habits that foster the inclusion of God into their everyday lives and thinking. Where possible, Biblical Studies will be practical; providing students with opportunities to personally experience aspects of responsive discipleship as they seek to be God's people under his rule.

Enrolment Process:

The success of STEP is dependent on the relationship between parents and the College. This relationship begins and is maintained through open and honest conversations about the parents' hopes and dreams for their child (both long and short term goals) and commences with the school at the point of enrolment.

Enrolment Steps:

Pre Application Tour - Come and see the College and meet key staff. We will show you our facilities and gain an understanding of your child's needs and give you an idea of our capacity to serve your child.

Application - Submit an Enrolment application and supporting documentation. STEP staff will review the application and seek further information where necessary.

Student Visit and Parent Interview - The student joins the STEP Class and spends some time in this classroom. The aim of this visit is twofold. First, it provides the student with the opportunity to familiarise him/herself with the environment and the staff. The second objective is to provide an opportunity for the staff to observe the student over two consecutive days with a view to determining how best to cater for the student's needs. On the first day, once the student is settled, parents meet with the STEP team for a formal enrolment interview.

Enrolment Outcome Notification - Once the visit has been completed the Step staff review the application and make a decision on the suitability of the Student for enrolment in the program. Parents will be informed in writing if the application has been successful or not.

FAQ:

How are students supported to Transition into STEP?

Once eligibility has been established and an offer of enrolment accepted, students participate in the STEP Transition and Orientation program. This orientation commences with a week-long visit to the STEP class in Term 4 of the year prior to the students commencement of the STEP programme. This visit enables the student to get to know both the staff and other students, feel safe and become familiar with the rhythms of the class. As part of this process parents meet with the STEP team to document learning plans and further familiarise themselves with the program. Parents and students will also participate in events and evenings that all other students participate in as part of their transition and orientation to the College.

How big is the Step Class?

STEP does not have a size cap as class size is contingent upon student needs. The goal is always to maximise the learning environment by ensuring that the teacher can teach in a setting which is conducive to effective learning. When it comes to numbers, the class size will generally be around 5 - 8 students.

Where is the STEP Located?

To promote a sense of belonging and community between the students in the STEP program and the mainstream school, every endeavour will be taken to remove differences. The learning spaces, play spaces and uniform will be the same for all students. Our aim is to ensure that the STEP students feel safe and free from anxiety and stress.

Initially STEP will be located in the Junior Secondary School at the College. Students in STEP will have opportunities to integrate in mainstream classes where appropriate. As students progress through the program they will have opportunities to experience life on the Senior Secondary campus.

Will NDIS supported therapy be allowed onsite during school hours?

A central part of our philosophy is strong collaboration between the College, STEP, families and therapists. To support this, NDIS and privately funded therapy will be accommodated and encouraged at College during school hours. Facilitating these services not only allows us to support the students, but also the families who otherwise may have to seek therapy outside of school hours.

Will the school hours at STEP be the same as the main College?

The School hours at STEP will be the same as the main College. However, there will be flexibility for families and students to ensure students' needs are being taken into account and cared for. For example, if STEP students need more time to get to after school transport they will be released early from class to facilitate this transition.

What will the fees be for STEP?

STEP Tuition fees are the same as the College fees. The *STEP Foundation* is an optional program for families and friends of the College to voluntarily contribute to. This foundation provides for resources and growth of the program. Contributions are tax deductible.

What Staff are in a STEP Classroom?

A qualified teacher and a full time educational support staff member will facilitate not only the academic learning journey, but also provide the students with experiences designed to develop social skills, problem solving and functional life skills that will underpin life beyond school.

Parents may choose to access NDIS funding for a personal carer to accompany and support their child at school. This carer will be welcomed into the classroom teaching and the support team. The carer will be asked to commit to upholding Bayside's Code of Conduct.