Rationale

Children at St Joseph's School study the Italian language and culture as part of our curriculum. Through the program we aim to enable the children to communicate effectively in speech and writing in a language other than the English language. All children from Prep to Year 6 participate in the program which introduces the basics of the Italian language and culture and which extends as the ability levels of the children increase.

Studying another language provides for all children an opportunity for first-hand experience of another linguistic system and the culture it expresses. Such experiences can open the way to a deeper understanding of one's own language and the culture in which it is based.

The experience of more than one linguistic perspective develops divergent thinking skills in children and this helps them to develop a more flexible approach to thinking and learning. Children will learn about the characteristics of language - its rules and conventions - and of the social and cultural context in which it operates.

Access to two or more languages provides children with other ways of labelling the same object. This is an important conceptual development.

We aim to involve the children in listening to and speaking Italian with the added aim of enabling children to read and write it.

The program in our school aims to increase the awareness of the multi-cultural and multilingual nature of this community and Australia and the world in general.

Belief Statements

At St Joseph's School all children learn Italian as a Community Language. We believe that this is an important part of their education because:

- Students are given opportunities to participate in the life of another culture and gain understanding of the differences and similarities among languages and cultures.
- Students are able to expand their knowledge and approach tasks with insights gained from another language and culture.
- Students develop a positive attitude towards learning a language other than English.
- Students acquire basic communication skills in LOTE.
- Learning another language assists students to understand the influence of gender, race, ethnicity, class and culture on contemporary Australian society.
- The study of Italian gives children the opportunity to learn about things from a European perspective. This complements other cultural studies (eg. Studies of Asia) which form part of our integrated curriculum.
- The study of Italian provides children with insights into a culture which is quite significant in Melbourne.
- Learning another language promotes cognitive growth and divergent thinking and enhances intellectual and social development.

Why Do We Teach Italian at St Joseph’s School?

Following extensive consultation with parents, the Italian language was chosen for our LOTE program for the following reasons:

- We were unable to secure the services of a teacher of Japanese (this was the first choice of the majority of parents).
- Parents viewed Japanese as the main Asian language and viewed Italian as the main European language. Vietnamese Catholic parents were very keen for their children to learn Italian because of the religious links.
Many parents welcomed the opportunity for their children to explore a European culture through its language.

There were no children in the school with an Italian background. This meant that all students were starting from the same point.

Resources for the teaching of Italian were more readily available than for other languages.

All of the Catholic secondary schools in our area taught Italian as a LOTE.

**Aims**

At St Joseph's School we aim to assist students to:

- Develop and refine receptive, productive and interactive use of the Italian language.
- Develop some degree of communicative competence in the use of Italian in its spoken and written forms.
- Increase their understanding of the systematic nature of the Italian language and languages in general.
- Appreciate and respect the ways of life, culture and views of others.
- Acquire cognitive, affective and sociocultural skills that may be transferable to other areas of learning.
- Further develop self-awareness and a sense of personal and cultural identity.
- Prepare for a broader range of experiences in the future use of the Italian language in social and cultural activities including leisure, work and study.
- Increase awareness of the multilingual and multicultural nature of Australian and other societies.
- Contribute to the social, cultural and economic resources of the community.
- Gain enjoyment from the study of another culture through its language.

**Program Implementation**

Italian is currently taught across all levels of the school. Our funding allocation from the Catholic Education Office remains at 2 hours per week. The school absorbs the cost of employing the Italian teacher for a further 3 hours per week. This means that each class receives specialist instruction for one hour per week.

The L.O.T.E program in our school is based on VELS and is supported through program resources such as 'Arcobaleno' and 'In Compagnia'.

**Assessment**

A variety of assessment techniques are utilized at St Joseph's School. These are based on VELS Standards and Focus Statements. Work samples and other assessment records are kept by the teacher in portfolios. A portfolio is a collection of records of students' activities and of the communicative roles they have played. It encompasses records of learning, such as learning logs, workbooks, response journals, oral communication records, writing files, and folios. Written tests are utilized to show the extent of each child's knowledge and their ability to apply it.

**Reporting**

Reporting on individual children's programs and progress is made available to parents and relevant parties as appropriate, regularly throughout the year.

Opportunities for reporting take place through:

- Twice yearly written reports
- Curriculum nights
- Formal and informal parent/teacher interviews
- Parent education sessions
- Formal/informal displays.
Our Model

Our language teaching model provides for:

- An initial shared experience to stimulate students’ interest, focus their learning and provide some linguistic and cultural input.

Followed by a variety of language recycling activities varying from:

- Simple non-threatening whole group work which is strongly supported by the teacher.

- Small group work where support is provided – peer group modeling takes place.

- Pair work where greater onus is placed on the individual.

- Spontaneous communication inside and outside the language classroom.

- The main emphasis of teaching is on communication and interaction in Italian.
- An appropriate balance of the four language modes is maintained, the variation depending on such factors as the level of language, the age of the students and the actual program.
- Language is introduced in a meaningful way as an entity – in context- not as a collection of disjointed items.
- Grammar, being only one part of the composition of language is taught in context and is seen as the expression of the relationship between words and long utterances.
- The cultural aspects form an integral part of the teaching program.

- Formal/informal displays.

Evaluation

The evaluation of our LOTE program and policy will consist of the following components:

- Further professional development for staff that examines current practice in the light of most recent theories of LOTE learning.
- A critical examination of the current policy, it's relationship to other policies and in the light of information gained from the components in the evaluation process.
- A full review of the planning processes used within our school.