After more than 12 months of preparation, St Columba’s School, with schools Australia wide, has commenced implementation of the Australian Curriculum in the areas of English, Mathematics and Science in 2012.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION...**
(from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority - ACARA website... http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/ )

**What is the Australian Curriculum?**
The Australian Curriculum sets out what all young Australians are to be taught, and the expected quality of that learning as they progress through schooling. At the same time, it provides flexibility for teachers and schools to build on student learning and interest. In 2008, the Australian education ministers agreed that a national curriculum would play a key role in delivering quality education and committed to the development of a Foundation to Year 12 national curriculum. The Australian Curriculum is being developed initially in the areas of English, Mathematics, Science and History, followed by Geography, The Arts and Languages and the remaining learning areas focusing on Economics and Business, Civics and Citizenship, Health and Physical Education, Design and the Technologies.

**Why have an Australian Curriculum?**
An Australian Curriculum in the 21st century needs to acknowledge the changing ways in which young people will learn and the challenges that will continue to shape their learning in the future. Education plays a critical role in shaping the lives of the nation’s citizens and to maintaining Australia’s productivity and quality of life. To play this role effectively, the intellectual, personal, social and educational needs of young Australians must be addressed at a time when ideas about the goals of education are changing and will continue to evolve. Australia’s education ministers have identified contemporary views of education over the period 1989-2008 and documented those most recently in the 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. The Melbourne Declaration commits to supporting all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens, and promotes equity and excellence in education. Developing an Australian Curriculum means that:

1. School and curriculum authorities can collaborate to ensure high quality teaching and learning materials are available for all schools.
2. Greater attention can be devoted to equipping young Australians with those skills, knowledge and capabilities necessary to enable them to effectively engage with and prosper in society, compete in a globalised world and thrive in the information-rich workplaces of the future.
3. There will be greater consistency for the country’s increasingly mobile student and teacher population.
What should all young Australians learn?
The Australian Curriculum focuses on an entitlement for all students while acknowledging that the needs and interests of students vary. As a result, the curriculum sets out what is expected for all students to learn as well as articulating additional learning options. The first four areas of the Australian Curriculum have been written with the intention that they are taught to all students in each year of schooling from Foundation (in Queensland known as Prep) to Year 10. Decisions about the structure of the remaining areas will be the subject of consultation. It is intended that jurisdictions, systems and schools will be able to implement the Australian Curriculum in ways that value teachers’ professional knowledge, reflect the local contexts and take into account the individual’s family, culture and community background.

The Australian Curriculum sets out what all young Australians are to be taught, and the expected quality of learning as they progress through schooling. You can view the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au.

What are the elements of the curriculum?
The overall structure of the curriculum is consistent across learning areas and includes the following elements:

• A rationale that explains the place and purpose of the learning area in the school curriculum
• Aims that identify the major learning that students will be able to demonstrate as a result of learning from the curriculum
• An organisation overview that provides an overview of how the curriculum in the learning area will be organised from Foundation (Prep in Queensland), through to Year 12
• Content descriptions that specify what teachers are expected to teach. These are accompanied by elaborations that illustrate the content descriptions
• Achievement standards that describe the quality of learning typically expected of students, and which are accompanied by work samples that illustrate the achievement standards through annotated student work
• General capabilities that describe a set of skills, behaviours and dispositions that apply across subject-based content
• Cross-curriculum priorities that ensure the Australian Curriculum is relevant to the lives of students and addresses the contemporary issues they face.

What are the content descriptions?
The content of the curriculum for each learning area is arranged by broad organisers (strands) and presented as content descriptions, which describe what teachers are expected to teach at each year level. The content descriptions include the knowledge, skills and understanding for each learning area as students progress through schooling. The content descriptions provide a well-researched scope and sequence of teaching, within which teachers determine how best to cater for individual students’ learning needs and interests. Examples that illustrate content descriptions can be found in the elaborations. These assist teachers in developing a common understanding of content descriptions.

What are the achievement standards?
An achievement standard describes the quality of learning (the depth of understanding, extent of knowledge and sophistication of skill) typically expected of students as they progress through schooling. An achievement standard comprises a written description with illustrative student work samples. The sequence of achievement standards across the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum describes and illustrates progress in the learning area. This assists teachers to plan for and monitor learning and to make judgements about the extent and quality of learning. The achievement standards can support formative\(^1\) and summative\(^2\) assessment practices and provide a basis for consistency of assessment and reporting. In addition, annotated work samples are provided to assist teachers in making their reporting judgements.

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1 Formative Assessment is part of the teaching and learning process and may provide the information needed to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening.
2 Summative Assessments are given periodically to establish at a particular point in time what students know and do not know.
**What are the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities?**

The Australian Curriculum pays explicit attention to how seven *general capabilities* and three *cross-curriculum priorities* contribute to, and can be developed through, teaching in each learning area.

The seven general capabilities are:
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Information and communication technology competence
- Critical and creative thinking
- Ethical behaviour
- Personal and social competence
- Intercultural understanding.

Increasingly, in a world where knowledge itself is constantly growing and evolving, students need to develop a set of skills, behaviours and dispositions, or general capabilities that apply across discipline content and equip them to be lifelong learners able to operate with confidence in a complex, information-rich, globalised world.

The three cross-curriculum priorities are:
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
- Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia
- Sustainability.

**What information is fundamental to the three Learning Areas that St Columba’s and schools around Australia are implementing in 2012?**

*The Australian Curriculum: English* is organised into three interrelated strands that support students’ growing understanding and use of Standard Australian English (English). Together the three strands focus on developing students’ knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating. The three strands are:
- **Language**: knowing about the English language
- **Literature**: understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature
- **Literacy**: expanding the repertoire of English usage.

*The Australian Curriculum: Mathematics* is organised around the interaction of three content strands and four proficiency strands.
- The content strands are *Number and Algebra, Measurement and Geometry*, and *Statistics and Probability*. They describe what is to be taught and learnt.
- The proficiency strands are *Understanding, Fluency, Problem Solving*, and *Reasoning*. They describe how content is explored or developed, that is, the thinking and doing of mathematics. They provide the language to build in the developmental aspects of the learning of mathematics and have been incorporated into the content descriptions of the three content strands described above. This approach has been adopted to ensure students’ proficiency in mathematical skills develops throughout the curriculum and becomes increasingly sophisticated over the years of schooling.

*The Australian Curriculum: Science* has three interrelated strands: *Science Understanding, Science as a Human Endeavour* and *Science Inquiry Skills*.

Together, the three strands of the science curriculum provide students with understanding, knowledge and skills through which they can develop a scientific view of the world. Students are challenged to explore science, its concepts, nature and uses through clearly described inquiry processes.

(Acknowledgement is given to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority for the above information… [http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/))
LOOKING FORWARD…

What are some of the implications with implementing the Australian Curriculum?

- Teachers will be working across multiple curriculum Frameworks for a number of years
  In 2012…
  - St Columba’s, along with other Queensland schools will plan, teach, assess and report English, Mathematics and Science across the year levels using the Australian Curriculum. Teachers will also have the opportunity to become familiar with the new P-10 History curriculum, ready for implementation in 2013.
  - Focus on the Queensland curriculum, via documents provided by the Queensland Studies Authority, will be maintained for other learning areas, including:
    - Studies of Society and Environment
    - The Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, Media & Visual Arts)
    - Health & Physical Education
    - Languages Other Than English (Italian: Years 3-7)
    - Technology
  - The exception is Religious Education, where our curriculum direction is provided by the Archdiocese of Brisbane.
  - The Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (developed by the Queensland Studies Authority) will still be used in Prep, in particular, to provide a balanced teaching, learning and assessment program that encompasses Religious Education and the five contexts for learning in this early phase of learning and development (that is, Religious Education, Social and Education Learning, Language Learning and Communication, Early Mathematical Understandings, Health and Physical Learning, and Active Learning Processes). These guidelines will be used in conjunction with the Australian Curriculum.

- There are similarities and differences between the Australian Curriculum and the Queensland Curriculum which student learning has been based on until now. Some implications of the differences include:
  - New (Australian Curriculum) content that was not previously included in the Queensland curriculum at any Year level, or there is a change of focus.
  - Content that was previously included in the Queensland curriculum which has now moved to a different Year level in the Australian Curriculum.

Our teachers at St Columba’s are mindful of these differences and the implications of such during our transition to the Australian Curriculum. We recognise that there will be areas where bridging learning experiences will be necessary due to new or shifted content.

- Changes, to a degree, will be necessary with our reporting practices, including written ‘report cards’. We will be wise not to rush into major modifications until we have received guidance from ACARA, the Queensland Studies Authority and Brisbane Catholic Education. Support in this area is still being developed by these authorities. It is anticipated that written report changes, along with associated adjustments to aspects of assessment and parts of student learning portfolios, will be developmental as the transition period to the Australian Curriculum progresses.

What if, as a parent or carer, I have questions or want to know more about the Australian Curriculum?
Your child/ren’s class teacher, Mrs Margo Carwardine (our Assistant Principal and Curriculum Support Teacher), as well as the ACARA website may be able to assist.