Authority, is a worldwide Assessment and Reporting the Australian Curriculum, which is recognised by international school, because it wanted to communicate that its officially recognised PVIMS recently decided to become a well-known alternative schooling program around the world. Maria Montessori around 1907, and philosophy was developed by attending playgroup. further 40 children and families of St Helena educates primary school children. Currently about 160 students attend the school, as well as 40 younger children who attend the early learning program and a further 40 children and families attending playgroup. The Montessori education philosophy was developed by Italian physician and educator, Maria Montessori around 1907, and became a well-known alternative school around the world.

Principal, Maree Matthews, says PVIMS recently decided to become an officially recognised international school, because it wanted to communicate that its curriculum, which is recognised by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, is a worldwide

By ANDREA BISHOP

Discovering the world through every sense

Plenty Valley International Montessori School (PVIMS) in the outer northeastern suburb of St Helena educates primary school children. Currently about 160 students attend the school, as well as 40 younger children who attend the early learning program and a further 40 children and families attending playgroup.

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Mathematics the Montessori way: a big part of Montessori education is ‘sensorial’. Brain research shows if children can write things down as well as feel them and look at them there’s more likely to be memory recall.

Students are able to move through the grades and cycles according to their individual learning needs. “We don’t have a school calendar that determines when a child has finished grade one to go to grade two, which is quite unique,” says Dr Matthews.

“If a child needs to go into grade two in the middle of the year, then that’s built into the classroom cycle because it’s not age related. Also, if a child is in a top level in grade three and needs to go into grade four, that can occur whatever time it’s determined that the child is ready for further extension.”

As the curriculum isn’t static, when children reach top levels in cycle three they can continue to learn beyond the grade 6 curricula, extending them through to whatever learning level they are at. Dr Matthews says it takes skill and awareness, as well as astute observation, to know when a child is ready to move to the next level. “One of the big determining factors on children’s learning is the role of the teacher and the amount of feedback they’re giving the students. There’s a lot of didactic dialogue going on to enable children to understand where they’re up to and how they can move forward,” she says.

Another key ingredient of Montessori schools is true personalized learning – children are free to work on whatever subject appeals to them.

“Some students doing literacy, some mathematics, others working on a science experiment,” Dr Matthews says.

“These children are on the floor, standing up, they’re wherever their learning will take them; it’s up to a very skilled teacher to be able to let go and give them an opportunity to be absorbed in their learning, but also be there to support and nurture them, to scaffold their thinking and understanding – it’s a very specific role the teacher plays, and our teachers have a post-graduate specialised training and qualification in Montessori as well as their trade qualifications.”

Numeracy and literacy are seen as vital at PVIMS, as is taking a holistic approach to education so children can immerse themselves in their passions and become lifelong learners. Because of high achievement levels, the transitions to senior school are usually easy, with many having received academic or artistic scholarships.

Looking to the future PVIMS will continue to develop their programs while maintaining the spirit and community the school has. “We’re aware that we’re part of a wider world and that’s why we’ve become an international school — we’re part of a global society and we want our students to be aware of their role in that global society.”

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Independent Schools

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Principal Dr Maree Matthews with students.

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