

# To 2020 and Beyond

An open letter to all parents of DCC Primary students | 1 August 2018

In recent years we've been blessed with an exceptional and sustained rise in enrolments at Donvale Christian College. During this time, we released our strategic document, 2020 Vision, and have been developing our school in line with that. We're pleased to inform you of two planned developments within the Primary program – the details of which follow.

## A Change to Primary Languages

From the beginning of 2019, Mandarin will replace German as our Language alongside English from Prep through to Year 4. In 2020 this will extend into Year 5, and then into Year 6 in 2021. From 2022, German will no longer be offered in the Primary Years.

In Secondary, Mandarin will be introduced in 2022 at Year 7 and will be offered alongside German as a language study option.

This change is being made in recognition of the enormous cultural, commercial, and social changes that have occurred not only in Melbourne, but in Australia as a whole, during the decades since the foundation of our school. There is no doubt that for Australians in the 21st century an understanding of China, its culture and language, will be beneficial for social, professional, and missional reasons.

## A Change to Primary Class Structure

From the beginning of 2020, Primary classes will be taught in single year classes from Prep to Year 6, replacing composite classes in Years 1-6. We anticipate that there will be a maximum of four classes in each Year level.

We see this change as crucial to maintaining a strong sense of community within an ever-increasing student population. As our Year groups in the Senior Primary already hover around 100 students, this change will provide us with greater levels of community engagement as we plan significant Year-based activities throughout each calendar year.

As we look forward to 2019, 2020, and beyond, enrolment waiting lists now exist for many year levels throughout the College. This challenge of managing waiting lists in a transparent, fair and efficient manner is a new one for us, but it's one we embrace with enthusiasm as we see God growing our College community. Changing the Primary class structure will provide a greater reliability around enrolled numbers for families and the school alike.

We will explore these very exciting developments further at our next Association meeting on Thursday 9 August. We do hope you can join us.

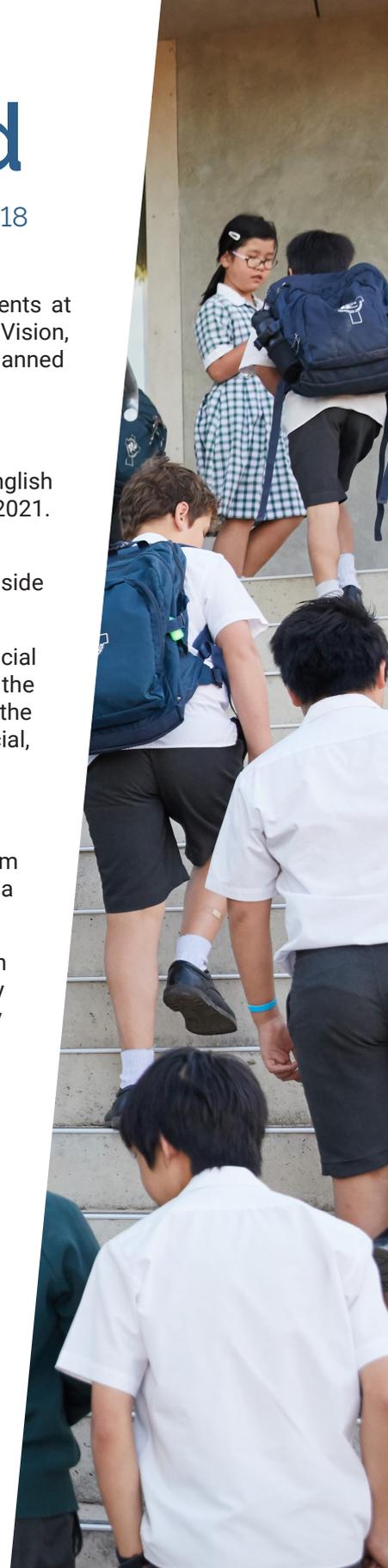
Blessings,



Tim Argall  
Executive Principal



Brad Greenwood  
Board Chair



## You're Invited!

Our next DCC Association meeting, scheduled for Thursday 9 August from 7.30-9.00pm, will be largely set aside to be an information evening to address practical questions about these changes. We invite all association members, as well as all Primary parents, to join us on that evening.

To best prepare to address any questions these announcements might raise, we invite you to email your questions to [primary@donvale.vic.edu.au](mailto:primary@donvale.vic.edu.au) and we will collate these and ensure that we tailor our presentations accordingly.

# FAQ

## 1. How did you reach these decisions?

Internal reviews of our operations are conducted annually by the Senior Leadership Team. Primary class structure has been reviewed consistently for the last decade. We have been actively investigating a possible change to Mandarin as our Primary language since 2015. The Board have been engaged on these reviews and discussions regularly. Early this year, as we prayed and considered the educational and operational implications of both these changes, the Board and Senior Leadership Team committed to partnering in a deep exploration of the earliest sensible dates for implementing these changes, as we discerned that now was a good time to actively work towards them happening.

The earliest sensible date for changing to single year classes is 2020, which allows for proper staff preparation, and timetable and calendar management. The change to Languages is easier to make sooner because it does not require as significant a rearrangement.

## 2. Donvale has always said that composite classes provide an excellent teaching environment. How can you be sure that learning won't be adversely impacted by this change?

We have implemented excellent teaching and learning practices through composite classes for many years now. However, there's no clear research that conclusively demonstrates that *either* single year *or* composite classes provide better outcomes. Both have their advantages and disadvantages because there will always be variations in student ability in any given class. Our staff are well-equipped to cater for this in every classroom already; differentiated learning is a reality in all our classrooms and as a result of team planning and our school-wide teaching approach – none of this will change.

## 3. My child has been studying German for three/four years, now they will have to switch to Mandarin. Were the years doing German a waste of time?

Not at all! Not only is there no reason why your child can't pick up German again in Secondary if they really love the language and have an aptitude for it, but they are best placed to make this language choice when they are asked to do so in Year 7. By beginning at an early age, learning something as complex as Mandarin is made more accessible. Further, by having begun to grasp the process of learning a new language, learning another new language is easier.

## 4. What process was followed that led to this decision? How was parent input sought in the decision making process?

The College Board, consisting of parents of current College students, sets policy and guides the direction the College takes. Responsibility for executing policy is delegated to the Executive Principal and the Senior Leadership Team. Both groups are committed to a humble, prayerful approach to all their decision-making and we trust God to guide our decisions.

Every year, formal surveys are carried out with some or all parents – seeking feedback and suggestions. Input from parents through many different interview settings, along with correspondence received, also informs our reflections on current practice. These two decisions are the result of consistent, ongoing feedback from these sources over the last five years. As well, general community conversation regarding the Languages offered by the school has been commented on in Board communications as far back as 2013; it could be argued that we are behind in making good on those communications!

## 5. Suppose I don't want my child to learn Mandarin?

There are certain core requirements which all school students in Victoria must meet. One of these is a study of at least one Language subject up to Year 8. All schools make their own decision as to which language, or languages, to offer. In line with our College's heart for equipping its students to best meet the world of their future as followers of Jesus, we have made the decision that the future of our children, growing up in Australia with its strong commercial and social links with China, as well as the missional possibilities, will be best served by teaching its language and culture.

Question not answered? Please email us at [primary@donvale.vic.edu.au](mailto:primary@donvale.vic.edu.au) and we'll endeavour to answer it at our next DCC Association meeting on Thursday 9 August, from 7.30-9.00pm.