

The Inquiry Approach to Teaching and Learning

About Our Units of Inquiry

“Tell me and I forget, show me and I remember, involve me and I understand.”

“It is in the answers to the questions we ask that our knowledge exists.”
(Aristotle)

As an International Baccalaureate School delivering the Primary Years' Programme (IBO PYP) we advocate a structured and purposeful inquiry approach to delivering curriculum. It is child centred, both in terms of learning and assessment. It encourages children to formulate and investigate their own questions, based on existing knowledge, and to evaluate their own learning. It is a global, holistic curriculum approach which develops conceptual understandings, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, and insists upon reflection.

North Ainslie has adopted a transdisciplinary, inquiry based approach to learning in the areas of social sciences, health, technology and science. The program of inquiry is carefully planned by teachers and is designed to give students the skills to take the lead in their own learning. Together with our students we establish what each child knows, what knowledge s/he has access to, and what knowledge s/he can build. Together with our students we explore the world in which we live, ask questions, make discoveries and develop new understandings.

Our adoption of this approach empowers us to meet national and system curriculum requirements alongside the needs of our students. We seek to promote, reflect and utilise the diversity of cultures and backgrounds within our existing school community, given that our students come from over forty different cultures and speak more than eighty different languages.

What is Inquiry Learning?

Inquiry learning involves the process of asking questions, investigating, creating, discussing and reflecting. Initially the teachers model the inquiry process and then guide the students through it. Later the students participate in more independent units of inquiry where classmates investigate topic-related questions that are student formulated. This is why “teacher questions” and “student questions” are found in the checklists in our students' Unit of Inquiry Books.

This approach to learning helps children to develop the understandings, concepts, skills and attitudes of an international, lifelong learner.

In Kindergarten inquiry is largely done through play where children engage in problem solving, posing questions, trialling solutions and refining learning. This type of inquiry occurs naturally through planned, scaffolded and well structured play sessions where teachers have explicit teaching goals.

Research shows that a play based inquiry program enhances literacy and numeracy outcomes, engages children in writing, improves social skills and enhances well-being. It also provides a seamless link between preschool and formal schooling.