OUR VISION

VISION
Melbourne Girls Grammar aspires to develop ethical women of action. Through a focus on learning, research and innovation we will be recognised by our own community, the national and international community as a leading school in girls’ education.

MISSION
In the pursuit of our vision, Melbourne Girls Grammar is committed to the provision of an exceptional education for girls, with an emphasis on strong Christian values, high expectations, creativity and academic challenge.

Within a supportive and optimistic culture we provide opportunities for students to discover their passions and build their capacities for action and influence within their many life contexts.

VALUES
In support of our mission, Melbourne Girls Grammar values are:
- Integrity
- Compassion
- Courage
- Self-discipline

VISIT MELBOURNE GIRLS GRAMMAR
For further information or to request a tour of the Early Learning Centre facilities, please contact the Melbourne Girls Grammar Enrolments Office on 03 9862 9200 or enrolments@mggs.vic.edu.au

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It is my pleasure to welcome you and your family to Melbourne Girls Grammar. We are a community that embraces its diversity and seeks to offer rich and varied opportunities for all types of girls to pursue their passions and interests. Your daughter will be encouraged to develop the confidence, skills and experience to excel in life beyond school. Leadership, team building, social and cultural awareness, and a strong sense of personal self worth are crucial components of her education at MGGS. We believe that students thrive when they are engaged in a challenging academic program within a nurturing environment.

Melbourne Girls Grammar is a place where challenge and choice create opportunities for every girl to discover who she is meant to be. May you enjoy being a part of our wonderful community.

Catherine Misson
Principal
Every day, the girls enrolled in the Early Learning program at our Barbara Tolson Centre are full of excitement as they explore environments that are varied and engaging, with an emphasis on creativity and play. Our Early Learning Program nurtures our girls’ innate curiosity and extends knowledge and skills through challenging, purposeful experiences.

The Early Learning Program at Melbourne Girls Grammar has been influenced by a number of theoretical perspectives and learning practices that draw upon a range of research into neural development and learning through secure, nurturing relationships.

We promote equity, recognise children’s rights and value the diversity that children bring to the Barbara Tolson Centre.

Literacy, numeracy and scientific experiences are embedded into the Program. We recognise the importance of developing literacy skills in children from birth to five years and look closely at the link between language development in a social setting and literacy skills. Our Program is learner focused, using intentional teaching to support, co-construct and scaffold learning. Creativity and curiosity are highly valued traits that are nurtured in the Early Learning Centre. We have transformed our learning environment so that children learn by doing. They are supported to grow as self-directed yet co-operative learners who joyfully explore and build new competencies that lead to enhanced confidence and resilience.

The curriculum decision making process is a model where educators formulate the Program based on their knowledge of the children, through ongoing data gathering and a holistic approach to children’s learning. The Program is designed to support the girls’ development with Key Learning Outcomes, the foundation upon which progress can be identified, documented, analysed and communicated with families.

Through a process of reciprocal learning and through ongoing data collection, the qualified Early Learning educators reflect and build upon their knowledge of each child while sustaining and enriching educational action. With students’ learning at the core of our Program we work closely with families to identify, assess and plan for optimal development of potential and engagement in learning.

Essential to a high quality early learning program is high quality teaching staff. Positive and secure relationships between educators and children are central to our girls’ social and emotional development and for the continued development of cognitive capacities.
Our educators are critically reflective practitioners who hold a holistic view of children and their learning. They view children as strong, capable and resourceful (Malaguzzi, 1993) and recognise the potential of all children.

With an aim of giving visibility to children’s learning, we offer a secure and safe environment where curiosity is encouraged, concepts are explored and discovery is celebrated. The children experience the power of learning together in large and small groups while still pursuing their own individual learning pathways.

The environment plays a fundamental role in supporting and extending children’s development and learning. At the Barbara Tolson Centre there is a particular emphasis on both the indoor and outdoor aesthetics. This has influenced our reshaping and design of our learning studios to provide rich sensory experiences for children to discover. A deep respect for the natural environment is encouraged through exploration and involvement in sustainable practices.

We recognise that through play, children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they actively engage with people, objects and representations. Play encourages exploration, risk taking and social competence and supports the development of emotional regulation.

As early childhood educators we work closely with families to develop a rich picture of each child’s learning strengths and challenges. The relationship that we build with students is founded upon respect – for their thinking, their culture, their views and their feelings. We respect the children’s right to engage in a learning program that recognises individual learning styles and preferences. We believe that young children’s learning is essentially a social process that involves listening, engagement, communication and repetition. We recognise that a strong sense of wellbeing in a safe environment is essential if optimal learning is to occur.

Assessment for learning is undertaken as a process of gathering and analysing information about children’s learning in order to enhance their development. Educators observe, listen and support the children to collaborate with one another to wonder, delve and discover the world around them.

Our Statement of Philosophy describes our values, beliefs and understandings and informs our day to day practice. It is based on the belief that children are capable of thinking deeply and creatively.

We recognise the rights of students to explore, question, reflect, problem solve, theorise and communicate their thoughts and findings through a range of expressive languages.

We place a high emphasis on our environment, both indoors and outdoors, to ensure that there are opportunities to explore, discover, and engage in learning.

We strongly believe and actively promote the importance of the early childhood years in supporting curiosity, self-confidence and reciprocal relationships in laying the foundation for ongoing learning and wellbeing.

We promote equity and value the diversity that students bring to the Barbara Tolson Centre.
At the Barbara Tolson Centre we believe that the best possible program for our girls to engage in is one that recognises the importance of play and intentional teaching.

Through play children can explore and reflect on interests and issues relevant to and meaningful in their lives. Play encourages exploration, risk taking, socialisation and engagement in learning.

Play provides opportunities for children to learn, as they discover, create, improvise and imagine. Children’s immersion in their play illustrates how play enables them to simply enjoy being. (EYLF, p.15)

Environments that are rich, varied and engaging enable our girls to initiate their own learning through play. Through choice and opportunity our girls can express a sense of agency. Such inviting learning environments have been established through intentional planning to extend student learning. Students are encouraged to work both individually and collaboratively.

Intentional teaching involves educators using strategies that promote students’ thinking, builds on language through social contexts and extends knowledge and skills through challenging experiences.

Intentional teaching is deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful. (EYLF, p.15)

Meaningful curriculum is developed through a process of reflective practice. Reflective practice is responsive to the interests of the children and their families, builds on quality data and informs future planning. The thoughtful and well planned environments at the Barbara Tolson Centre demonstrate the value of play in constructing knowledge independently and through guided experience and collaboration.
Early childhood education has been valued strongly at Melbourne Girls Grammar since the early years of the 20th century. Principal Mary Morris spoke of her desire for a kindergarten at Speech Day in 1901 and the kindergarten was eventually established in 1910.

Miss Dorothy J Ross, Headmistress 1939 – 1955, had been a lecturer at the Kindergarten Teachers’ College, Kew, and appreciated the child-centred individualised philosophy of early childhood education.

In October 1940, she established the Garden Nursery School in the grounds of Phelia Grimwade House, the first of its kind in Australia to be attached to an independent school. Miss Thea Wilkinson was the Director, ensuring that the children learned through an exploration of play in an outdoor setting. When the Junior School was evacuated during World War II to Marysville on 5 March 1941, the two to four year old children went as well and were housed at ‘Mt Kitchener’, one of four guest houses taken over by the School.

During the early 1960s, Miss Newell was a much loved kindergarten teacher and her students can fondly recall sitting in a child-sized arm chair on a raised platform listening to stories. In the late 1970s, the School Council decided to include a co-educational preparatory year for four and a half year olds, with the new preparatory classrooms situated in Braemar House in Walsh Street, adjacent to the Senior School. At the end of the preparatory year, the boys moved to Wadhurst and the girls transferred to the Morris Hall Campus. Co-education at the preparatory level continued until 1987, when Melbourne Grammar closed its primary department at Domain Road and transferred the boys to Grimwade House in Caulfield.

In 1994, a pre-preparatory class was once again introduced into the Walsh Street premises – now known as the Barbara Tolson Centre. The Early Learning Centre was then extended to accommodate a three year old kindergarten group in 1996. In 2007, the Barbara Tolson Centre became an Early Learning Centre for three and four year old girls with the relocation of the preparatory year to the Morris Hall Campus.

Our Early Learning Centre is named for Mrs Barbara Tolson in recognition of her many years of service to Melbourne Girls Grammar. A former student, past member of the School Council and Old Grammarians Committee, Mrs Tolson is a most compassionate and generous person and she is a treasured friend of the Early Learning students.
Australia’s Early Years Learning Framework has the vision that: “All children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation.”

The Early Years Learning Framework is part of the Council of Australian Government’s (COAG) reform agenda for early childhood education and care.

The Framework draws on conclusive international evidence that early childhood is a vital period in children’s learning and development. It has a specific emphasis on play-based learning and recognises the importance of communication and language (including early literacy and numeracy) and social and emotional development.

The Framework conveys the highest expectations for all children’s learning from birth to five years and through the transitions to school. It communicates these expectations through five Learning Outcomes.

The Framework defines a Learning Outcome as: A skill, knowledge or disposition that educators actively promote in early childhood settings in collaboration with children and families.

The Early Years curriculum is designed to support the girls’ learning and development and these key Learning Outcomes are the foundation upon which progress can be identified, documented, analysed and communicated with families. The Framework recognises that every child will achieve the learning outcomes in different ways, at different rates and at different times.

Assessment and Data Collection

Data collection in its various forms of documentation is vital in the assessment cycle and our daily interactions with children, parents and educators. It provides the support structure to all that we do and visibility to children’s learning.

This process of reciprocal learning, through data collection, ensures that we reflect as educators, building our knowledge of each child while sustaining and enriching educational action.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

IDENTITY

CONNECTION WITH COMMUNITY

WELLBEING

CONFIDENCE AS LEARNERS

EFFECTIVENESS AS COMMUNICATORS

3 YEAR OLD PROGRAM

4 YEAR OLD PROGRAM
Our Early Learning Centre is situated adjacent to the Merton Hall campus. The Centre consists of five flexible learning studios. The girls belong to one of five groups, each named after highly regarded past educators at Melbourne Girls Grammar.

The Barbara Tolson Early Learning Centre offers endless possibilities for each child to play, explore, develop relationships and engage with life’s joys and complexities.

Each group has a full time Early Childhood Educator and a full time Early Childhood Qualified Assistant. All our Early Childhood Educators are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

Our philosophy is intent on embracing a range of experiences and various ways of constructing knowledge. Our Artist in Residence Program, an annual event that runs for a term, offers inspiration and opportunities for students and staff to collaborate together, express themselves through their hands and thoughts and give shape to an artistic project.

Set among our beautiful surrounds, each room has a studio space with easy access to our outdoor spaces, enabling educators to implement an indoor and an outdoor learning program where appropriate.

The studios, rooms, outdoor spaces and resources are designed to support and promote each child’s love of learning. We understand the importance of being connected and feeling a strong sense of belonging to family, our setting and our School.

Three year old kindergarten

Davis Group
Mary Davis – a member of staff from 1932 – 1950 and Headmistress of Morris Hall 1940 – 1949. During this time, Miss Davis endured the wartime evacuation of the Junior and Middle Schools to Marysville.

Mitchell Group
Lorna Mitchell – School Captain 1931. Her family were strong supporters of the Grammar community, in fact, a preschool centre was at one time held in their family home.

Thomas Group
Merna Thomas – Head of Morris Hall 1961 – 1980. Miss Thomas organise the establishment of our Caroline Street campus.

Four year old kindergarten

Ross Group
Dorothy Ross – Headmistress 1939 – 1955. In 1940, she established the Garden Nursery School in the grounds of the Phelia Grimwade House, the first of its kind in Australia.

Wilmot Group
Betty Wilmot – a boarder from 1925 and School Captain 1929. Betty Wilmot was Director of Maternal, Infant and Preschool Welfare at the Department of Health Victoria. She was appointed Officer of the Order of British Empire in 1978.

Moving on to Morris Hall

Our staff recognise the importance of effective transition from the Barbara Tolson Centre to the Junior Years Program at Morris Hall. The Early Years Educators and Junior Years Educators collaborate closely to ensure information about students is well understood, shared and valued. The focus is on respectful, reciprocal relationships between students, families and educators and the Transition Program is well planned and effectively evaluated. Knowing our students, understanding their strengths and their challenges enables us to provide optimum opportunities for individual children and ensures a successful and cohesive transition to the Junior Years.
Our Day

The beginning of any journey is very important and it is our aim to make your daughter’s transition to our Centre as smooth as possible. Our year begins with a transition program during the first two weeks of Term 1. At times, new girls begin during the year, and a similar introductory program is designed for each girl.

From 8.00am, our families are warmly welcomed by educators. Various experiences are ready for the students to engage in when they arrive. This can be a lovely time for parents to work with their children or to share a special book or learn about the ongoing project work. After our farewells to parents, our program begins at 8.45am.

During the morning the group comes together for a Morning Meeting. Morning Meetings give the children an opportunity to share ideas and engage in discussion about their project work for the day.

Children move from the meeting brimming with ideas and enthusiasm to work in the indoor environment. We often remain indoors until 10.30am, when the groups have their morning snack.

Mid-morning we go outside, however many children utilise both indoor and outdoor environments. Meal times are social occasions and the students are encouraged to sit in small social groups. Children need to bring their own snacks, lunch and drink bottles with water. The food brought should be adequate and nutritious.

Early afternoon is that time of day when all is quiet at the Barbara Tolson Centre. The children rest their bodies, read books and relax on their mats.

During the afternoon the program may be indoors or outdoors. We pack away at 2.50pm as a group before going home at 3.15pm. Children may be picked up at any time, especially if they are unwell or tired.

Our girls are able to use the resources of the wider Melbourne Girls Grammar environment. They visit the tennis courts, the library, the science laboratories, the Chapel of St Luke, the playing fields and other spaces at Merton Hall and Wildfell.

Our outstanding location enables us to extend the learning environment with ease and our girls frequently enjoy visits to the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Our timetable is a flexible one. This flexibility allows us to continuously meet the ever-changing interests of the students and to extend their thinking through the learning environment.

Outside School Hours Care

Before school care

Should you need to drop your daughter at school prior to 8.45am, you may access the Before Care Program, which begins at 8.00am. For 3 year olds, this is held in their own classrooms. The Before Care Program for the 4 year old girls is held downstairs in Rushen House in the Shared Space.

After school care

Camp Australia provides an After School Care Program between the hours of 3.15pm and 6.00pm each school day. Information regarding enrolment for this program is available on their website: www.campaustralia.com.au

Holiday Program

During the term breaks, the girls at the Barbara Tolson Centre are invited to attend the Camp Australia Holiday Program. Information regarding enrolment for this program is available on their website: www.campaustralia.com.au
Specialist Program

Music and Movement
Music at the Barbara T olson Centre is considered a language of expressive capacity and potential. The specialist program aims to provide the foundation for children’s musicality through dance, movement, music and storytelling. The use of voice, beat, melody and rhythm are the defining features of the program. Sol-fa hand signs are introduced to teach skills in pitch discrimination and rhythm syllables are gradually incorporated through sight reading. The development of students’ musical literacy and their confidence to participate is of primary importance.

Physical Performance and Health
Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, personal hygiene, physical fitness, emotions and social relationships is integral to wellbeing and self-confidence. Physical wellbeing contributes to children’s ability to concentrate, co-operate and learn. (EYLF pg.30)

The Physical Performance and Health curriculum aims to enhance a child’s perception and understanding of herself and her world through movement and motor experiences. The program acknowledges the benefits of good physical health on wellbeing, self-efficacy, confidence and ability to engage in learning. Being active and promoting movement skills and appreciation of a healthy lifestyle are important components of the program.

Italian
Learning a Language Other Than English (LOTE) at the Barbara T olson Centre lays the foundation for further study of languages, fosters an appreciation of the role of language and a growing awareness and appreciation of different cultures. To maximise engagement with the target language and participation in the learning process, the children’s input and ideas are encouraged and valued. It is through play that the children learn the foundations of communicating in Italian – through greetings, games and the interactions of general classroom language, family, colours, numbers, days of the week, favourite pastimes, songs and stories, the seasons, nature, food and places.
LISTENING

Through listening we gain understanding, we value others and we share experiences.

THE CHILD
is made of one hundred
The child has
a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking
of playing, of speaking.

A hundred, always a hundred
ways of listening
of marvelling, of loving
a hundred joys
for singing and understanding.

A hundred worlds to discover
a hundred worlds to invent
a hundred worlds to dream.

The child has a hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
but they steal ninety-nine.

The school and culture
separate the head from the body.
They tell the child:
to think without hands
to do without head
to listen and not to speak
to understand without joy
to love and marvel
only at Easter and Christmas.

They tell the child
to discover the world already there
and of the hundred
they steal ninety-nine
forcing thought without a body
action without a mind.

They tell the child:
that work and play
reality and fantasy
science and imagination,
sky and earth,
reason and dream
are things
that do not belong together.

And thus they tell the child
that the hundred is not there.
The child says
No Way
The Hundred is there.

Loris Malaguzzi 1920 –1994
(Inspiration of the Reggio Emilia
educational experience)

At the Barbara Tolson Early Learning
Centre we predispose ourselves to listening
beyond verbal language and recognise that
there are multiple aspects to our students’
wellbeing.

We listen not just with our ears but all
our senses. And we listen to the thousand
languages, symbols and codes we use to
express ourselves and communicate.

Through listening with our eyes we see.
Atara, Ross Group 2012
EARLY LEARNING
HANDBOOK

Principal
Mrs Catherine Misson

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Middle Years
Merton Hall
86 Anderson Street
South Yarra Victoria 3141 Australia

Junior Years
Morris Hall
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South Yarra Victoria 3141 Australia

Early Learning Centre
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