

LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH – NOONGAR AND INDONESIAN

Noongar and Indonesian are the two languages that are taught at our school. St Andrew's Catholic Primary School is the only Catholic primary school to offer Noongar language as part of their language program. Learning both languages provides students with essential communication skills in both languages as well as improves student's literacy and cognitive reasoning and broadens their understanding of different cultures both, here in Australia and in Indonesia, our closest neighbouring country.

There are 14 dialects of Noongar in the southwest, our school is located in Noongar Wadjak country, and this is the dialect our students learn. The languages are offered on a semester basis to both junior and senior class groupings. They are rotated on a half yearly basis.

There are many benefits to learning a second language such as, building confidence, improved understanding of first language (English), improved memory and decision making. Learning a second language can also stall the onset of dementia and Alzheimer.

Learning an Aboriginal language of the area in which you live encompasses a deeper cultural understanding about yourself, and the country in which you live. Aboriginal languages are taught by themes such as birds, land animals, seasons, greetings, marine animals etc. Children are able to connect language to the flora and fauna that they see daily within the school and the wider community. Learning Noongar language compliments the early years learning framework which has five outcomes; children have a strong sense of identity, children are connected with and contribute to their world, children have a strong sense of wellbeing, children are confident and involved learners and children are effective learners. These outcomes are achieved when language is successfully taught. A lot of language learning is active listening and speaking, children become confident through role play and their minds are always code switching between English and Noongar.

Noongar language provides opportunity to connect with the environment and through Aboriginal philosophy and law, children are taught about being connected to all that is, sharing an "ours" attitude rather than the "mine" mentality.

Aboriginal languages compliment the Western Australian curriculum in other learning areas and teachers often look for opportunities to support their teaching practice through the Aboriginal language teacher. Important cultural dates are inclusive in language classes such as NAIDOC week, National Reconciliation Week, Harmony Day, Sorry Day, etc. Through language classes children get an Aboriginal perspective on what these significant days are about.

