



SAS frequently asked questions

ENROLMENT

Do you have tours or open days?

Volunteer parents, coordinated by the P & C, conduct tours of the school at regular intervals.

In 2019 an Autumn Fair is scheduled for Sunday 5th May. This is a wonderful opportunity for the wider community to come see what SAS is all about.

Do you have an information pack?

No, we hope much of what you'd like to know can be found on our website, beginning with this document.

Is there a catchment area?

SAS is a non-local intake school. However, if places available are 'oversubscribed' then placement is made based on the directive (by regulation) 'nearest to the school'.

Please see the Department of Educations "Schools Online" website to ascertain your proximity to Spearwood Alternative School.

<https://www.det.wa.edu.au/schoolsonline/home.do>

Is it common for there to be more subscribers than there are positions vacant?

Particularly in the early childhood years, yes.

Is there a waitlist?

No. As a public school no waiting lists are kept. Either a position is available or not.

What ages do you take children?

Children can be enrolled the year they turn four before the 30th of June.

How do we enrol?

Applications for Enrolment for Kindergarten and Pre Primary are accepted from the beginning of the school year, closing at the end of week 3 of July in any given year. An original birth certificate or passport and proof of residence, ie a utilities bill, is required when the Application for Enrolment is submitted.

If a position is offered a copy of your child's Australian Childhood Immunisation Register form must be supplied, which can be accessed online from Medicare at:

http://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/How-do-I-access-my-vaccination-record

<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/enrolling-in-school>

Are there mixed aged classes?

Each class has two year groups learning together.

Narooma (place where magic happens): Kindergarten and Pre Primary

Cooinda (happy place): Years 1 and 2

Bakoolba (freedom and expression): Years 3 and 4

Bungana (eldest): Years 5 and 6

What is the daily timetable like?

Classes PP to 6 start at 9:00am. It is requested that children be at school no later than 8:45 am and no earlier than 8:30am. The school day concludes at 3:10pm each day except Wednesday when it concludes at 2:30pm.

The Kindy program operates from 8:45am for 9:00am until 12:45pm Monday through to Thursday.

Whole School Meetings are held each Wednesday morning 9:00am – 9:40am. Kindy kids do not usually attend this until late in the school year – and from then on regularly. There is not a set time for recess and each class decides this when it seems natural in the flow of the morning. Lunch is at a set time and is 12:40pm – 1:20pm each day. The children eat their lunch as a whole school group and are required to spend at least 15 minutes eating their lunch before playing in our gorgeous grounds.

Various programs are conducted during the week at regular times, ie, Harmony Groups, Kitchen Garden Yoga.

What are the school charges and contributions?

There is a range of charges and contributions prepared annually and endorsed by the School Board. These are updated each year to reflect the school's needs. The current Charges and Contributions list is available from the school office.

STUDENT CARE

Is there a particular underlying education philosophy that the school is based on, e.g. Reggio/Steiner?

There is no one particular philosophy that directs our pedagogical approach. We do practice student/learner centred learning. We do employ Restorative Justice practices and approaches. The ethos of the school is **Education Through Community: Community Through Education**.

Is social and emotional health and development a priority? What approach is used to address this?

Social and emotional health are definite priorities and this is evident in general exchanges and conversations and choices for instructional strategies. Programs and practices that support this are many and include Harmony Groups. Each child/family is assigned to a different colour harmony group. The senior students are leaders for these and staff member an elder as support. Children from Pre Primary to Year 6 meet in their mixed age Harmony Groups each Wednesday afternoon and at various other times and special circumstances. Programs such as MindUp and Rock and Water support the skills, particularly for clear communication, necessary for a Restorative approach (to behaviour and any conflict arising) to be effective.

Do you have a specific behaviour management policy? Do the teachers use such things as time outs and detentions?

We have a Behaviour Guidance policy and would say that 'behaviour management' is best served with the practices we have of building relationships and a culture of connected community: this supports working with restorative practices.

The other support to 'managing behaviour' well is that of instructional strategies serving as management strategies – built in procedures, practices and the like that support children feeling noticed and that they belong. These serve to support them being at their best and engaged in their learning. This really does minimise disruption.

Instances of 'behaviour' are perceived to be an expression of need and often make for some of the richest learning opportunities.

When a child has 'mucked up' an opportunity to 'make up' is always offered.

A child may simply need to have their attention drawn to what their class agreement (that is collaboratively designed) is and their commitment to that.

Time outs and detentions are not used.

If a child does need to be – for their own or safety of others – withdrawn (or withdraws self from group) it is always to take the time to settle down, to use identified strategies to cool off and to come back.

For children identified as having special needs (sensory disorders, autism spectrum, other) a behaviour plan may well be articulated – agreed with child, family, teachers, principal. The aim always is to support students to develop self-regulation and self-management skills. Many of the programs and practices in place support our children in this way, general class practices, plus programs such as Rock and Water; MindUp; Harmony Groups. Staff are skilled in supporting children's emotional and social development.

How are the classrooms set up? Are they set up like mainstream classrooms where students sit at desks or are the classrooms set up with activity stations that allow for more movement?

Narooma and Coinda are set up with all sorts of learning centres/areas and much child choice. The other two see the children grouped around tables or individualised as they establish between them what is most workable. The kids do not necessarily always take the same place/space each day. Kids often choose spaces outside. Other areas such as The Art Shed are set up to promote the learning of that space. Currently in development is a larger area dedicated to being a space for exploring, thinking and creating in the ways of **Scientists, Technologist, Engineers and Mathematicians.**

Is there allowance in the school day for the kids to move if they need to (outside of recess and lunch)?

The kids move in and out of the class fairly freely and have brain food snacks and water bottles in their classes. They have 'brain breaks' and are often moving about. We are aware of the need for this and the improvement in learning for all. In 2017 the Move to Learn program was explored in Narooma and in 2018 introduced to the whole school and will continue in 2019.

What's the policy on children needing to access the toilet during class time?

Children go to the toilet when they need to go to the toilet. The child just needs to indicate that they are leaving the class to go to the loo so that the teachers know where they are. If a pattern occurs, seeming to indicate an avoidance of something in particular, this would be discussed and negotiated.

Do you have a food policy? Is there use of food rewards?

We have Healthy Food guidelines and these are subject to the Healthy Food policy that all schools are. We do not use food as a reward.

We have vegie gardens and fruit trees and each class is engaged in a cooking program (though not for the kindergarten kids). In Kitchen Classes each week children prepare their own lunches and sit and eat together as a group before going out to play.

During the 'cooler terms' parents devise a roster for delicious, nutritious soups to be purchased at a nominal cost once each week.

Do you have associated before and after school care?

We have no associated before and after school care.

SAS PROGRAMS

What specialist subjects are offered?

The Arts has long been a focus for SAS. A specialist Art teacher (visual art) is also the Design Technology teacher. A term each of music, dance and circus skills are offered. Each class has a yoga lesson each week. Bungana students participate in surfing lessons during term two.

Do the children study any languages other than English (LOTE)?

Most recently the language other than English taught at SAS has been Noongar.

Do the children do sport/physical education? And if so, is it competitive?

The kids do participate in movement/fitness/physical education. In Narooma this comprises obstacle courses, free active play, lots of vehicles and much manipulative equipment. The classes begin with brain gym each day. The older classes participate in exercises of the Rock and Water program. PP – 6 have and will continue to enjoy a term of dance class and of circus skills annually. The kids play both collaborative and what may traditionally be seen as competitive games without emphasis on the competition. Many kids place an element of competition in the sport that they choose for themselves; mostly they are encouraging of each other and appreciate fair play. We have no competitive sports days.

Kids have been introduced to skills for many of the conventional sports and many choose sports and dance options outside of school.

In recent years we have brought specialist sport instructors to the school in tennis, basketball, soccer, etc to further the kids' physical skills.

Do the teachers teach to the kids or are they more facilitators of learning?

The teachers consider themselves learners and facilitators of learning, helping children build their own learning power with the skills for effective independent learning.

Do you use merit certificates or anything along those lines?

We do not use merit certificates on a regular basis. We believe in continual constructive, authentic feedback that fosters further learning.

OUR STAFF

How do you choose your staff?

Staff apply to be here because they are philosophically aligned with the ethos of the school and are chosen on merit through application and interview by a panel that includes parent representation.

What is the policy on teacher professional development?

We assign a great deal of our school budget to professional development. Currently, as a professional learning community, we are exploring together the work of Harvard Uni's Project Zero: [Making Thinking Visible](#) and [Creating a Culture of Thinking](#). Our emphasis is on pedagogy and practices that optimise learning and the learning environment and empower the learner as well as curriculum content. In 2018 all teaching and some support staff attended a conference with Ron Ritchart, Harvard professor and co-author of both books mentioned.

In 2018 we reviewed restorative practices as a whole school community and considered how to better include kids in decision making processes as we define student centred learning. More staff also trained in the Rock and Water program.