



**Saints  
Academy**  
FOR THE WHOLE OF LIFE



## EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

**Maximise their potential  
and *develop a foundation*  
for future success in life.**

## To create an *intentionally* *unhurried* learning environment

St Philip's Christian Education has developed an outstanding after school program to meet the needs of families within our school communities. The program meets the high standards of excellence provided across other areas of the organisation including schools and early learning centres. We have created a program that children long to be part of and look forward to attending outside of school hours, providing opportunities for further learning and spiritual discipleship in a safe environment with qualified Christian staff. At the time of day when other children are heading home, these children are filled with anticipation and excitement for what's ahead in their afternoon.



## OUR VISION

To create an *intentionally unhurried* learning environment where our student-centered adventures contribute to improved wellbeing and allow children and young people to master learning and skill development, through connection with the wider natural world, nurtured within a supportive christian community.

# Our Objective

The focus of the Saints Academy after school program is to engage children in the natural environment through active outdoor education programs or nature play. We aim to get children outdoors and balance their screen time with green time. Time in the outdoors helps boost children's development across all domains. Saints Academy also includes opportunities for extended tuition in areas of the arts, STEM, health, fitness, leadership, and spiritual development.

Enrolment in Saints Academy provides opportunities for building friendships, developing talents and interests, and engaging in exciting learning opportunities without the pressures of academia. Extra-curricular experiences within the school environment build engagement and positive connections which often flow into academic achievement and student wellbeing. Children are encouraged to be curious, creative, resilient, and articulate.





# Opportunity

The duration of the current school day presents a challenge to staff and working parents within our community, necessitating the need to find alternate care for their children. Saints Academy extends the hours of the school day to reflect the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century society by providing care and nurture of children from Years K-6 along with enriching extra-curricular activities in the safety of a familiar environment.

The report 'Growing Up Digital' (Gonski Institute for Education, 2020) states 92% of Australian parents understand smartphones and social media reduce time children for physical activity and outdoor play, and 77% acknowledge devices hurt a child's wellbeing and relationships.

It is also reported that heavy media-multitasking results in an impaired ability to focus on cognitively demanding tasks and can impair social and emotional development (Williams, 2018). Clearly, indoor technology-based activities are impacting the way children live their day to day lives.

Saints Academy addresses these legitimate parent concerns by offering children opportunities in the outdoors. Outdoor education teaches children the skills of working together as a group, of problem-solving in practical ways, of leadership, appreciating the great outdoors, appreciating our bodies for their power and their strength (not just because of how they look), learning organisation and time-management, gaining independence, and developing persistence (Melbourne Child Psychology).

Nature Play will be a core focus. Nature play describes age-appropriate activities in an outdoor natural environment. The combination of play and the outdoors provides a powerful driver for physical literacy, social development, imagination, critical thinking, gross motor skills, mental health, and nature connection.

Guided outdoor play provides children with vital opportunities to build the foundational skills required to face challenges, solve problems, establish friendships, and build self-esteem. Nature play creates resilient, innovative, and healthy children who have the self-confidence to create their future (Nature Play for NSW).

Saints Academy program also provides for teaching and skill development in specialist areas. This will be part of an unhurried curriculum which allows specialists to teach their subject in depth without the time pressures of the school day. These pressures can often result in a more superficial coverage of learning rather than allowing for understanding and development of expertise. It is hoped into the future, that the Outdoor Education program offered by Saints Academy will be credentialed.



## The Outcome

The establishment of SPCC Saints Academy After School meets the extra-curricular and care needs of students from K-6 (initially) in a Christian environment within the safety of the school grounds.

Saints Academy is licensed as an Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) service to attract Childcare Subsidy (CCS) for families of enrolled children resulting in subsidised fees. In addition, the NSW government is offering \$500 BASC vouchers for working families of Primary school-aged children, further subsidising the cost for families. Saints Academy is not known as an OSHC program however will meet the requirements of the National Law & Regulations for the operation of such programs.

The Early Childhood Education Directorate has regulatory responsibility of OSHC in NSW. It is also responsible for the curriculum framework.

Saints Academy works in close partnership with the Colleges to achieve better outcomes for children. "Strong partnerships between schools and after school services enhance children's learning and development in both formal and informal ways" (NSW Department of Education Guide to outside school hours care). There is much opportunity through working in partnership, to optimise students' engagement with school leading to increased interest in academic performance and aspirations of higher learning.

# Structure

An intentional unhurried focus on learning “possibilities” in the hours after school has led to the development of structured daily elective-style offerings for the children. This importantly allows for student choice each day, whilst also catering for the wide range of God-given gifts, abilities and strengths inherent within each child.

## ACTIVE CORE

Sport, physical education & motor-skill development program

## ADVENTURE CORE

Nature play & outdoor exploration program

## CREATIVE CORE

Visual arts mixed-medium program

## DISCOVERY CORE

STEM-inspired program, including LEGO learning

# Sample Daily Schedule

<b>2.45PM</b>	Afternoon Tea
<b>3.00PM</b>	Core Learning 1 (Choice of 4 electives)
<b>4.00PM</b>	Change-over time. Opportunity for toilet & reapplication of sunscreen (if learning outside)
<b>4.10PM</b>	Core Learning 2 (Choice of 4 electives)
<b>5.00PM</b>	Story-time & Quiet Zone - Intentional calming time by engaging with story, sketching the story, silent reading, solo lego
<b>5.10PM</b>	Choose your own journey - board games, finish off creative / art time or discovery time, handball, worship music
<b>6.00PM</b>	Close



## Staffing

The Head of Saints Academy is a Masters-qualified teacher and leader, with experience in school leadership, and will oversee the entire Academy as it grows across locations.

Each location employs a qualified Nominated Supervisor and other Educators with specialist strengths for the day-to-day running of their location. Qualified staff bring a high level of child development knowledge, and the skills and ability to work intentionally to ensure student needs are met.

Additional specialist teachers are contracted and managed by Saints Academy to provide further opportunities for children. These staff may be included in the Saints Academy program for a term block or, they may hire a tuition space within the school.

## Initial Success

Saints Academy After School at Cessnock, opened with 94% enrolment as compared to the previous providers 60% capacity. There has been exceptionally positive daily feedback of the transformation since the introduction of Saints Academy from all key stakeholders (school leadership, staff, parents and children).





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