Our Grade 7 Transition Programme

At the beginning of secondary school children face numerous challenges. As well as dealing with maturing emotions, a changing body and more complex intellectual concepts, young adolescents are entering a new stage in their educational life. Making the transition from the protection and comfort of primary school to the relative freedom and independence of secondary school can be challenging, to say the least.
Structure, support and balance

A structured approach

At Launceston Grammar we see Grade 7 as a pivotal year in a young adolescent’s development. It is a year of transition, when they are in need of challenges and opportunities, when they are often at their most vulnerable, and therefore in need of structure and guidance.

Our carefully phased, year long programme has provided a successful transition for over 25 years. It responds to the developmental needs of adolescents through providing caring relationships, high expectations and support, while offering enrichment and exploratory options with socially relevant learning opportunities. It supports students as they move out of the protective primary school environment, by way of a purpose built learning environment known as the ‘Log Cabin’.

A supportive environment

The Grade 7 Log Cabin was specifically designed to meet the developmental needs of young adolescents. While it is geographically situated within the Senior Campus, the Log Cabin provides a welcoming and nurturing environment that gently opens students up to the wider experiences of secondary school. Now a long entrenched Launceston Grammar institution, the Log Cabin has been proven to increase parental involvement in secondary school life, provide plenty of healthy interaction between students of differing ages, and encourage continuity between primary and secondary school curricula.

A balance of teachers

Just like primary school, our Grade 7 students have a class teacher who is responsible for their overall welfare, and especially aware of the new challenges that secondary school brings. The class teacher works to ensure that each child in their class is known, listened to and understood. Our teachers go out of their way
to help Grade 7 students handle new pressures in all facets of their life, from understanding their changing roles within their communities, to the conflicting messages they receive through popular culture. Following a contemporary approach to the middle school years, students have, where possible, three teachers for almost half of their total academic time: a humanities teacher, a maths and a science teacher. Students also have specialist teachers to oversee their learning in arts, technology, physical education, music and a language other than English.

**A balance of pursuits**

Our transition programme is carefully tailored to provide a balance of focused academic work, cooperative community building and the vigorous pursuit of areas of interest both inside and outside of the classroom. Every student in Grade 7 plays a musical instrument and participates in an ensemble. Students have the opportunity to audition for the advanced senior orchestra and concert band, as well as train in orchestras, bands, and vocal ensembles. We offer advanced programmes in visual arts, performing arts and ICT Literacy, and encourage students to become involved in school activities such as public speaking and debating. Our diverse Grade 7 curriculum also features two Outdoor Education camps, including a four-day camp in the second week of their new school year and a seven day experience on Maria Island in Term 4. A special feature of both these camps is that they are undertaken by all students in the grade at the same time adding greatly to a sense of a shared experience.
Things you *may be wondering*…

**Is one year long enough for a transition (as opposed to a three year ‘Middle School’)?**

Current research suggests that less transition obstacles are better for children moving through adolescence. Over the last 25 years it has become obvious to us that the Grade 7 Log Cabin transitional model is by far the best for our students.

We have a carefully phased movement from their familiar primary school environment to Grade 7 and onward to Grade 8, where students maintain some contact with their Grade 7 teachers while they become fully part of the Senior Campus. In this way, we have created a gradual transition – little steps, each year – not just one big step at any particular point.

**What are the physical advantages to the Log Cabin?**

Being geographically located within the Senior Campus but nurtured in the Log Cabin classroom environment, our Grade 7 students are gently opened up to the wider experience of secondary school. The separate learning centre with its own oval and covered play areas provides our students with security and comfort. Many teachers come to teach them in their home room, while they also move beyond the Grade 7 area for practical subjects such as sciences, physical education and sport, music, art technology, drawing and home economics.

**How else do we bridge the gap between primary and secondary school?**

Like primary school, our Grade 7 students have one consistent homeroom teacher responsible for their welfare. This teacher has class contact for a large proportion of time-tabled lessons, and is the focus for pastoral care. Like secondary school, students also have specialist teachers to inspire interest in subjects
which include history and geography, maths and science, art, technology, physical education, music and languages. Grade 7 students also gain experience of the full range of elective subjects which assists them to make informed subject choices in future years.

**Is there much parental involvement?**

The Log Cabin is a welcoming learning environment that positively encourages extensive parental involvement in Senior Campus life. The students’ homeroom teacher provides a consistent access point for parents, and is able to give reliable and informed feedback on any of the students in their care. Assessment methods include extended student/parent/teacher meetings and ongoing progress reports, so that parents are kept up-to-date with their child’s progress.

**What other features make Grade 7 different from primary school?**

Students become a member of one of our five Houses with which they form an identity and have the opportunity to represent their House in intra-school competitions.

Students take part in a comprehensive pastoral programme, designed to build successful peer relationships and leadership skills. It also includes activities to foster personal organisation, time management and revision and examination techniques, critical for academic success in secondary school.

We provide flexible groupings of students and development of individual learning programmes, to allow for academic support and extension programmes.

The programme involves a spiritual dimension, with weekly Grade 7 Chapel Services and Christian Studies lessons with the School’s Chaplain.