Girls Unit Policy

Williamstown High School

Ratified at WHS School Council meeting on: Tuesday 11th August 2015

To be reviewed: August 2018
At Williamstown High School we value:

- Excellence and creativity in our achievements and ambitions,
- Integrity and honesty in our actions and relationships,
- Diversity in our curriculum, in each other and in our community,
- Strong and open communication between our school and our homes, and between our teachers, our students and our families,
- A commitment to social justice and a passion to protect and improve our environment and our community.

Rationale

Williamstown High School’s Girls Unit is a unique program that offers girls a single-sex education in a coeducational setting. As part of the 2001 amalgamation with Point Gellibrand Girls’ Secondary College, the schools chose to honour the educational setting of a single-sex college that had been running for 75 years, and we have maintained its commitment to girls-only education through the Girls Unit.

Each student at Williamstown High School is an individual with unique responses to teaching and learning environments. Essentially, the Girls Unit offers students a chance to learn in a single-sex environment, but with the capacity to interact with the co-educational program. We have three separate streams to meet the needs of students - mainstream co-educational, SEAL Program (accelerated learning) and the Girls Unit.

There is no definitive statement or research to indicate that girls will achieve higher results in a single-sex environment. However, trends in research indicate that many girls may thrive in a single-sex learning environment:

- "Girls at single-sex schools were less likely to see themselves as 'below average' in Maths and Science" (Sullivan, 2009, p. 281).
- Single-sex schooling "generally promoted a gender-atypical self concept" (ibid, p. 281), meaning that gender stereotypes are less present in girls-only classes, particularly in regards to subject selections.
- Sullivan’s study concluded that "single-sex environments can actually reduce the tendency of students to behave according to gender-typical stereotypes or norms" (ibid p. 26).
- An Australian study looking at the status of women in Science noted "girls perform better in Science in single-sex schools, especially when Science and mathematics are compulsory subjects in high school" (Bell, O'Halloran, Saw & Zhao, 2009, p. 36).
- A study in America found that "a positive impact of single-sex schooling on the academic, attitudinal, and social achievement levels of students, especially female students' (Morrell, 2009, p. 194).
Essentially, the Girls Unit offers students a chance to learn in a single-sex environment. This program has many holistic benefits for the girls; they will learn and grow together in a caring, supportive and empowering environment.

**What does the Girls Unit offer?**

From years 7-9, Williamstown High School offers a girl’s only educational setting. The number of single sex classes formed each year is flexible based on enrolment demand from our local community. When students reach Year 10 they select all of the subjects they wish to study. As part of this selection process, students from the Girls Unit have the option of a girl’s only English class.

The Girls Unit Coordinator organizes special girls-only enrichment opportunities and activities in academic and personal contexts such as guest speakers for special assemblies, self-esteem, and leadership and health workshops. Each year, Williamstown High School celebrates International Women’s Day, with an assembly and special guest speakers. The Girls-only Coordinator follows the academic needs of students and encourages extra curricula involvement. The learning environment in the all-girl classes is highly encouraging and supportive. Students in the Girls Unit are given opportunities to take on various leadership positions within the school.

Leadership opportunities are offered through the Student Leadership Program, in roles such as School Captains, School Ambassadors, Sport/House Captains, SCR leaders and members, and Social Justice Captains. There are also extra-curricular activities offered to students including School Aerobics, Interschool Debating and the Environmental Club. Input from parents and students are welcomed and encouraged in the development of the Girls Unit at both campuses.

**How does the curriculum differ from the mainstream coeducational classes?**

At Williamstown High School teachers differentiate units to best suit the needs of their class. Students in the girls’ only classes learn the same skills and content as the mainstream curriculum, but this maybe done through a different medium or with a different context. Instructions, activities and coursework are tailored to the individual needs of the girls. For example, in the English department, the girls study novels relating to female (as well as male) protagonists.

There is also an additional Homegroup curriculum that has been developed to meet the specific needs of an all girls’ class. This is taught in conjunction with the Homegroup curriculum prescribed for co-educational classes of the same year level.
New differentiated curriculum is continuously being developed for the girls’ only classes. Data collected from our girls’ only classes is the focal point when developing new curriculum to better meet the learning needs of the girls in these classes. Curriculum area teams are encouraged to regularly evaluate their mainstream curriculum and identify content that can be differentiated to focus on the learning interests and content connectedness for a girl’s only class.

**Enrolment for Year 6 Students**

All girls are eligible to apply to be in a girls’ only stream. Enrolment into the Girls Unit happens in accordance with the Department of Education Guidelines. Please refer to the department or school website for further information. If applying to the school from outside of our zone there are many factors that may influence enrolment into the program. They are:

- Commitment to their education through an exemplary record of school conduct and attendance,
- Their ability and dedication to modeling the school values,
- References from primary school,
- What is best for the student?

Enrolment application forms are available directly from the Principal or Transition Coordinator of your child's primary school. If you are in a government school, you should receive these forms around April. Students from private or religious schools need to contact Williamstown High School directly for an enrolment package. If you would like your daughter to be enrolled into the Girls Unit, this needs to be stated clearly (Williamstown High School- Girls Only) as your first preference on your enrolment form. You are also able to put Williamstown High School- Co Ed as your second preference.

**Applications for existing and new year 8-12 students**

Incoming and existing students who wish to be in the Girls Unit need to speak to the Year Level Coordinator/Principal about a class change and enrolment into this stream.

**Research**


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