

St Mark's Church School PE Journey



St Mark's Church School is an Anglican Independent School for girls and boys, from Preschool to Year 8. It is nestled into the Mt Victoria hillside across the road from The Basin Reserve. The school has an approximate role of 300 students from Year 1-8.

Sport Wellington has been working closely with St Mark's since 2013 developing the capability of teachers to improve the fundamental movement skills (FMS) of their students. In 2014 when Sport Wellington introduced the SportStart resource to schools in the Wellington Region, St Mark's Church School saw this opportunity as an extension to further develop staff capability in physical education and physical activity.



The rationale behind St Marks involvement with Sport Wellington is described by Matt McDonnell (Lead Teacher), *"We first became involved with Sport Wellington and the SportStart programme after meetings about Fundamental skills and sport development programmes at Sport Wellington. Once the pilot of SportStart was offered to us, it seemed only right that we develop the relationship further and seek to improve our offering"*.

St Mark's became one of five pilot schools to begin using the SportStart resource to assist in developing quality learning experiences in PE using a physical literacy approach. For the school, the timing seemed right as, *the Sport programmes and PE curriculum were reviewed and through this process, we discovered an inconsistency of approaches to teaching in this area. The programme needed to be redeveloped to ensure scaffolding and consistency from lesson to lesson and year to year for our wide range of learners. In order to achieve this, professional development was required around fundamental movement skills. Using SportStart has enabled us to create more sustainable change and improved physical literacy for students as well as build confidence and knowledge with our teachers. (Angelee Jarrett, International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP) Co-ordinator).*

The SportStart pilot also coincided with a new head of PE at St Mark's, who was tasked with raising the profile of PE through the school and implementing SportStart. All teachers participated in professional development training on how to use the resource which included how to plan and assess students. The head of PE then began embedding the SportStart programme throughout the school. At this time, PE was one period per week and Sport a double period of competitive codes each week.



With Sport Wellington's support over the three years 2014 – 2017, St Mark's has worked hard to build teacher capability in PE and physical activity using a Physical Literacy approach. Throughout this time the school has made changes both within the classroom and the wider school community.

1. A review of the Personal, Social and Physical Education - PSPE, as a curriculum subject was conducted by the school in 2015. The review revealed that teachers were feeling more confident in delivering PE and as a result their teaching was more focused and effective. *“Not only were the lesson plans easy to work with and easily deliverable, the assessment tools gave teachers some data from which they could now work groupings and next steps as well as report on. The delivery of the programme was backed up with observations from Sport Wellington so that teachers would feel supported. Sport Wellington has challenged and made us think about a range of delivery styles and learning outcomes as well as the practicalities of working the games to enable increased student engagement.”* Matt McDonnell (Lead Teacher)



2. After the review, St Mark's was able to embed the SportStart concepts into the schools wider planning documentation. *“As an IB World School, our teaching of PE/Sport is embedded within the wider subject of PSPE with the strands of Identity, Active Living and Interactions. The SportStart programme supported and helped us to extend in all three areas through conceptual understanding”.* Matt McDonnell (Lead Teacher)



3. Through using a physical literacy approach and considering the holistic needs of each child, St Marks made some changes to their sport programme. The school realised that not all students wanted to compete against other schools and began providing other options. Now instead of a double period of competitive sport, students have the option of being physically active through SportStart games. *“This has enabled all students across the school to be working at their own pace and level, and this has been a real shift for us philosophically.”* Matt McDonnell (Lead Teacher)



4. Physical literacy messages are shared:

- With The Board of Trustees and parent communities to inform them of the SportStart resource and how it is used in teaching PE. It also includes the importance of physical literacy.
- At the parent evening in February each year there is a presentation overview of SportStart.
- Through keeping the wider parent community informed about the SportStart programme and embedding a physical literacy philosophy across the school as an ongoing process through information evenings, school website and regular newsletters. ¹ “Our extensive Physical Education and Sports programme aims to develop children’s’ physical literacy by developing movement, communication and thinking skills. Physical Education lessons take place once a week for every class. In addition, the PE programme is complemented by our afternoon in-class sport programmes.”
- Using classroom blogs and Facebook as other avenue to share messaging with parents

To ensure sustainability of a physical literacy culture within St Mark’s Church School and the use of SportStart, the school has made a commitment to continued professional development for new teachers to St Mark’s by providing them with opportunities to attend workshops and receive support from the lead teacher. There is now a new lead teacher who is a PE specialist and can support new teachers as required. The previous lead teacher is still at the school to act as a support.”

Congratulations to St Mark’s Church School for their dedication in the ongoing development of their teachers to lead in PSPE.

For more information about SportStart go to www.sportwellington.org.nz/schools

¹ www.st-marks.school.nz/curriculum/physical-education-and-sports/